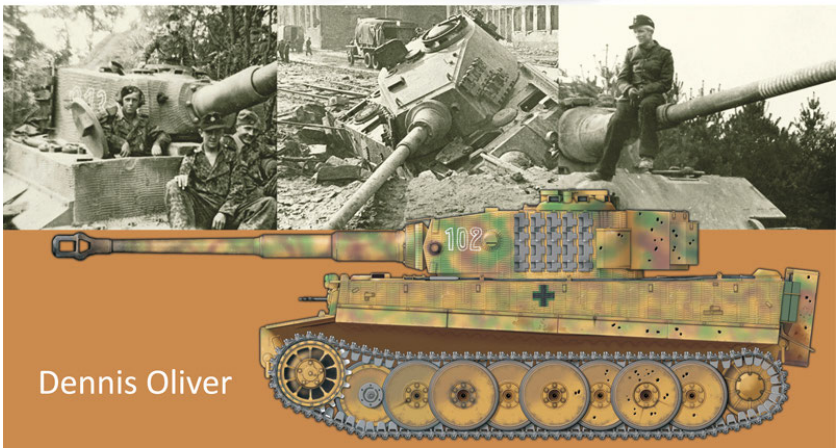
TIGER I and TIGER II TANKS

GERMAN ARMY AND WAFFEN-SS
THE LAST BATTLES IN THE EAST, 1945

TANK CRAFT



Dennis Oliver

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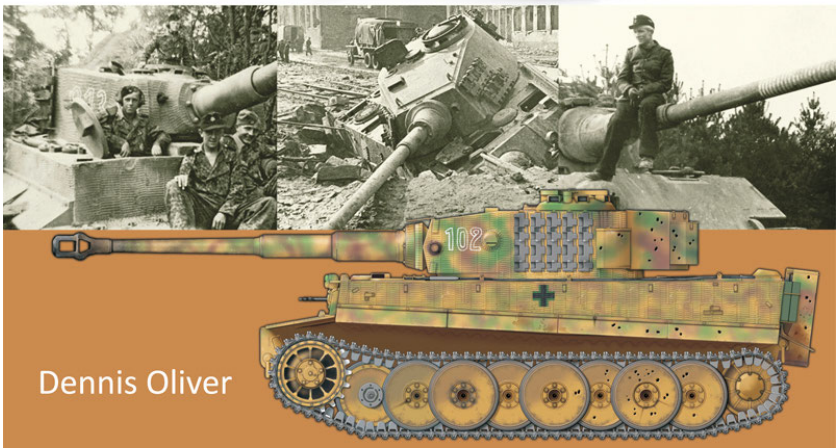

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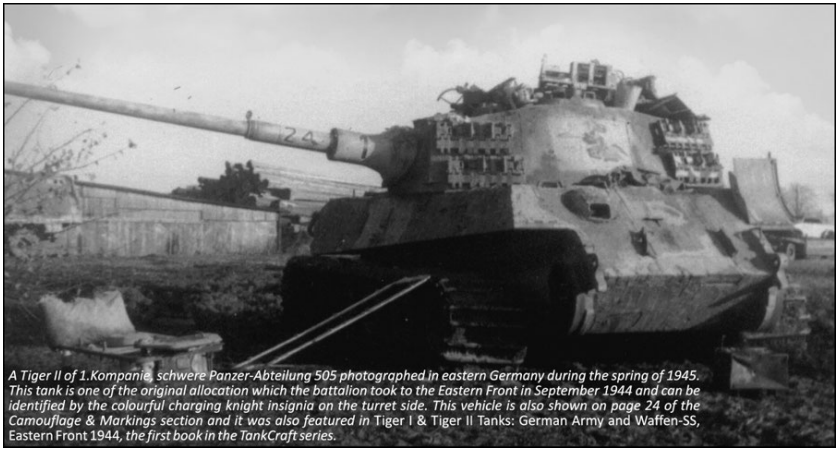

A Tiger II of 1.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505 photographed in eastern Germany during the spring of 1945. This tank is one of the original allocation which the battalion took to the Eastern Front in September 1944 and can be identified by the colourful charging knight insignia on the turret side. This vehicle is also shown on page 24 of the Camouflage & Markings section and it was also featured in Tiger I & Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS, Eastern Front 1944, *the first book in the TankCraft series.*

TankCraft 31

TIGER I and TIGER II TANKS

GERMAN ARMY AND WAFFEN-SS THE LAST BATTLES IN THE EAST, 1945

Dennis Oliver

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Front cover, at top: Dragon Models' 1/35 scale Tiger II built and painted as a tank of 3. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung Feldherrnhalle by Sheng Hui. A detail of this model is also shown on the back cover. Centre, from left to right: A Tiger I of 9. Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 3. A Tiger II of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503 abandoned in Danzig in the spring of 1945. Untersturmführer Karl Bromann, a tank commander of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung503.

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In the summer of 1944 the Red Army launched a series of offensives, each bigger than the Normandy invasion, which caught the Germans largely by surprise. Expecting the blow to fall on the units manning the southern edge of the front, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) was unprepared for the massive assault which drove through what is today central Ukraine and southern Belarus. By mid-August 1944 the Russian were on the Vistula and Heeresgruppe Mitte had been almost completely destroyed. The loss of 6.Armee at Stalingrad paled in comparison as over twenty divisions simply disappeared together with more than 500,000 men and an incalculable number of vehicles. Worse, the Soviets, although exhausted, were now within striking distance of Berlin.

It is difficult to imagine any army recovering from so devastating a blow but the Germans were able to conduct a tenacious defence on both fronts. Incredibly, in late 1944 and early 1945, along the Western Front and around Lake Balaton in Hungary, they were able to mount large-scale offensive operations. A key element in both defence and attack were the Tiger tanks of the heavy tank battalions, or schwere Panzer-Abteilungen.

The Germans had developed a defensive strategy that called for a fortified front line held by infantry formations equipped with large numbers of automatic weapons and backed by concentrated artillery support. If this line should be broken, an armoured reserve would cut off the enemy spearhead and seal the gap. In practice the armoured units were often scraped together from disparate formations and grouped into adhoc Kampfgruppen and this was a form of warfare at which the Germans excelled. So confident was the German high command that this situation could be maintained that projected completion figures running up to December 1945 were issued to companies producing armoured fighting vehicles. It was anticipated that by then new and improved designs would have been introduced.

But in reality, the attrition caused by battle was exacerbated by the dwindling number of replacements that left for the front as production figures fell. Henschel & Sohn, the manufacturer of the Tiger, reported that as early as September 1944 assembly schedules were being disrupted by the Allied bombing campaign.

In the first three months of 1945 the Henschel plant at Kassel was able to complete 112 vehicles in total but transport difficulties meant that many tanks never reached their assigned units. On the Eastern Front the losses suffered during early March 1945 in Operation Frühlingserwachen, the last major German offensive of the war, effectively ended the concept of a planned strategic armoured reserve. Now most units were simply fighting for survival. On 15 March 1945, the day the offensive was called off, the units on the Eastern Front could muster only 1,591 tanks of all kinds but only half of these were considered combat ready (1). The Tiger battalions, at the forefront of both the assaults and defensive operations elsewhere, were able to field just 125 serviceable tanks. These figures show that despite their fearsome reputation relatively few Tigers took part in the fighting and most Russian soldiers would never have seen a Tiger under actual combat conditions.

At right:In October 1944 schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 was sent to Hungary and 2.Kompanie assisted in the take-over of Budapest and one of the company's Tigers, numbered 234, is depicted here. The battalion was allocated forty-five Tiger II tanks in September 1944 and received just five further vehicles as replacements which were shipped by the Heereszeugamt on 11 March 1945 so we can assume that the appearance of most of the tanks would have changed little before the final days of the war. Although most of the Tigers photographed in Budapest were coated with Zimmerit and obviously painted by their crews, at least one tank, number 213, did not have the anti-magnetic mine paste and was not finished in one of the factory-applied camouflage schemes indicating that it was of somewhat later manufacture than the others. At left: Tiger I tanks of 9.Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 3 pictured on the cover of the 1 February 1945 edition of the Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung, a popular magazine of the period. Literally hundreds of magazine titles were on offer in Germany during the war and the Tiger was a regular feature. The photograph may have been taken when 3.SS-Panzer-Division was fighting north of Warsaw in late 1944.

A Tiger II of 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 photographed in Berlin at some time after the German surrender. The company number 311 is just visible on the turret side and this is the tank commanded by Hauptcharführer Karl Körner that was damaged on 23 April 1945 and set off looking for a maintenance facility as mentioned in the text. Exactly what happened to this vehicle is uncertain but it may have been abandoned in Wilmersdorf, south-west of the Berlin Zoo.

Notes

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1. This figure does not include assault guns and tank destroyers which accounted for just under 500 serviceable vehicles.

2. This figure does not include the claims of the Waffen-SS Tiger units, which were notoriously inaccurate, the tanks destroyed by the Tigers of Panzer-Regiment Grossdeutschland and the claims of formations allocated Tiger tanks in the last weeks of the war.

But this observation is not meant to detract from their effectiveness. Of the 48,000 Soviet tanks lost to all causes between 1943 and 1945, approximately 11% were destroyed by the tanks of the eight independent Heer battalions that operated on the Eastern Front (2).

The scarcity of these tanks and the dire situation that the Germans found themselves in during late 1944 and early 1945 go some way towards explaining the lack of photographs, as compared to earlier periods, and the reader will notice that the great majority of the images in this book are of captures or disabled tanks. This was in fact a great help when preparing the illustrations as many of the abandoned Tigers were photographed from several angles.

This book focuses on the Tiger tanks that fought the Red Army through eastern Europe and into Germany during the last few months and weeks of the war. As the conflict drew to a close the fighting increased in ferocity and many of the units mentioned in this book fought until the very last day of the war, and some beyond that. In the first book in this series, Tiger I and II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS Eastern Front 1944, we examined the technical development of these tanks and the modifications that were incorporated into production until the end of 1944. We also looked at the table of establishment for a heavy tank battalion introduced in June 1944 and in Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West 1945, the

organisational changes that were introduced in the following November were considered.

All units of the German army were built, equipped or refitted following detailed tables of organisation known as Kriegsstärkenachweisungen, usually abbreviated to KstN, but these were sometimes unachievable for units raised in 1945 and unless I have been able to confirm specific instances I have not included them in this book. Where I have been forced to speculate I have tried to make this clear. In addition, production of the Tiger I ceased in late August 1944 and there was an effort to re-equip the heavy tank battalions with the Tiger II, more correctly the Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B, and I have concentrated on the technical aspects of that model here.

Key to the map above: A. The front line on the evening of Thursday, 21 June 1944 just prior to the commencement of Operation Bagration. B. By mid-August 1944 the Red Army had advanced to the Vistula and destroyed much of Heeresgruppe Mitte in the process. C. The front line as it was on the last day of 1944. The rapid expansion in the south was

due in large part to the surrender of Romania and Bulgaria. D. 30 March 1945. E. 11 May 1945. 1. Wünsdorf, the OKW headquarters and communications centre until 20 April 1945 when it was moved to Krampnitz. The following are training and replacement establishments mentioned in the main text and timeline. 2. Truppenübungsplatz Arys. 3. Truppenübungsplatz Gross-Born. 4. Truppenübungsplatz Doberitz. 5. Truppenübungsplatz Juterbog. 6. übungslager Gorlitz. 7. Übungslager Ratibor.

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During the summer of 1944, in a series of massive offensives, the Soviets pushed the German army back through Byelorussia and the Ukraine into the Baltic States and Poland. By the end of August Heeresgruppe Mitte had essentially ceased to exist and the Red Army had created two bridgeheads on the western bank of the Vistula to the south of Warsaw. In mid-October the Wehrmacht was forced to fight on German soil when Russian units broke into the defences around the town of Gumbinnen in East Prussia, modern-day Gusev. Lightly held by the regiments of 18.Flak-Division and elements of Fallschirm-Panzer-Division Hermann Göring, the town fell to the Russians on 22 October 1944 but was retaken within 48 hours by the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 31 and the Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. Nearby Nemmersdorf was recovered on the previous day and German troops found that the civilian population had been systematically murdered. The savagery of the fighting here would set the tone for the battles in eastern Germany. Hastily scraped together reinforcements were rushed to the Gumbinnen area and by 28 October 1944 the Soviet thrust had been stopped near Goldap, about 30 kilometres south, although the town was occupied by the enemy. These battles are almost unknown in the west and in any case they were soon overshadowed when the Red Army launched a major offensive into Hungary which saw Russian soldiers fighting for control of the south-eastern suburbs of Budapest by the first week of November. On 5 November 1944, in a brilliantly executed local operation, German units recaptured Goldap in East Prussia but elsewhere they were in retreat and in the last days of 1944 the Russians created a huge bridgehead on the Danube at Gran, at modern-day Esztergom, cutting all

communications with Budapest and trapping five German and Hungarian divisions. Although the situation in East Prussia had been somewhat stabilised, further to the south, on the Vistula, the Red Army was poised to strike at Berlin. The timeline presented here lists the major events leading up to the end of the war in May 1945.

During the 1939-45 period much of occupied Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, particularly those areas that had formed part of Imperial Germany before 1918, were forced to revert to their old German names. In addition, a number of eastern European towns and villages were founded by German migrants who had retained their customs and language and hence their homes received German-sounding names. Almost without exception these names were abolished after 1945 and in addition the towns and cities of East Prussia were given Russian names. To avoid confusion I have endeavoured to use the names with which the general reader will be familiar and mention where there has been a change.

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1 January 1945. Operation Konrad I, an assault led by IV.SS-Panzerkorps to relieve Budapest, commences. The eleven serviceable Tigers of 9.Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 3 retake the town of Dunaalmas, north-west of Budapest, after celebrating the arrival of the New Year during the previous evening. Tanks of this unit will be in action on almost every day until the end of the war.

7 January 1945. Operation Konrad II, a further attempt to reach the garrison of Budapest, is halted at Pilisszentkereszt, 10 kilometres from the city's northern suburbs.

12 January 1945. The Soviets launch a major offensive near Baranov in southern Poland.

13 January 1945. The Russian offensive in East Prussia resumes

with an assault on Schlossberg, modern-day Dobrovolsk, which is met by units of 3.Panzerarmee. The last Tiger tank of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 is destroyed by its own crew during the withdrawal from western Poland. The battalion commander, Major Siegfried Saemisch, is killed on the same day.

14 January 1945. Russian units push towards Elbing in East Prussia.

15 January 1945. On the Vistula Front Kielce falls to the Red Army.

17 January 1945. The last German units leave Warsaw. Elsewhere, the defenders of Budapest withdraw to the west bank of the Buda.

18 January 1945. Operation Konrad III, a German offensive around Lake Balaton aimed at relieving Budapest commences. Units of IV.SS-Panzerkorps reach the Danube on the following day.

19 January 1945. Red Army soldiers cross the 1939 Polish-German border and enter Cracow which had been evacuated on the previous day.

21 January 1945. The Russians take Tannenburg in East Prussia. The Germans had thoroughly destroyed the memorial to their victory here over the Tsar's army in 1914 before evacuating the town.

22 January 1945. In East Prussia, Insterburg and Allenstein fall to the Soviets. On the following day their tanks reach Elbing and the Baltic coast.

24 January 1945. German units is Slovakia begin a general withdrawal. In Upper Silesia, both Oppeln and Gleiwitz fall to the Russians.

25 January 1945. The fortress city of Posen is completely encircled. Although partly immobilised by track damage one Tiger II tank of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502,

commanded by Unteroffizier Alfred Carpenato, manages to destroy fifteen Soviet T-34 and JS-2 tanks outside Kadgiehnen, near modern-day Kaliningrad.

26 January 1945. Although the tanks of 1.Panzer-Division had penetrated as far as Val, a small village on the western edge of Budapest, and established radio contact with the city's garrison, Operation Konrad III is called off. On the same day Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler is appointed to command Heeresgruppe Weichsel.

27 January 1945. Russian troops enter Memel on the Baltic coast, completing their conquest of Lithuania. German troops begin withdrawing from Upper Silesia. Near the village of Pettend in southern Hungary, three Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509, led by Hauptmann Hans-Jürgen Burmester, hold off an attack made by a Soviet tank brigade, later claiming to have destroyed forty-one Russian tanks.

28 January 1945. A single Pzkfw IV, the last operational tank of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501, is in action in the Ohlau Bridgehead in what is today western Poland. On the same day the Tigers of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503 go into action for the first time at the Driesen Bridgehead near Küstrin.

31 January 1945. Two Russian armies establish a bridgehead on the Oder River north of Küstrin less than 40 kilometres from Berlin.

1 February 1945. The encirclement of Küstrin is complete. Fighting near Stuhlweissenburg, south-west of Budapest, the Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509 claim the destruction of twenty enemy tanks in a single day. Hauptmann Herbert Tischendorf, a company commander with the battalion, is later awarded the Ritterkreuz for his actions on this day. On the same day schwere Panzer-Abteilung Grossdeutschland is officially dissolved.

2 February 1945. Red Army troops reach Frankfurt an der Oder. Kampfgruppe Langkeit, with two Tiger I tanks, is still fighting almost 10 kilometres to the east. The tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 5, supported by Luftwaffe fighters and bombers, launch a limited

assault on the Soviet bridgehead at Kienitz, north of Küstrin.

Below: A Tiger II of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 photographed in Budapest in late October 1944. Note the armoured guards for the rear hatch torsion bars and Zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste, modifications which date this vehicle's production to August or very early September 1944. At left: A Tiger II of the battalion probably abandoned near Brloh in western Czechoslovakia in early May 1945. The company number is clearly visible and a close examination of the camouflage pattern evident in the original print suggests that this is the same tank pictured below. The battalion received forty-five Tiger II tanks in late September 1944 and was not reinforced until March 1945 when a total of five new tanks were allocated. But it is unlikely that these all arrived at their destination and many of the older tanks were still on hand including that of the battalion commander which is shown in the Camouflage & Markings section on page 23.

3 February 1945. Landsberg, north-east of Berlin, falls to the Russians.

5 February 1945. Red Army troops reach Marienburg in East Prussia. At the end of two weeks of heavy fighting in East Prussia the Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505 claim the destruction of 116 enemy tanks and over seventy anti-tank guns. On the same day Hauptmann Hans Bock, the commander of schwere Panzer-Abteilung Grossdeutschland, is awarded the Ritterkreuz. Hauptmann Bock was the only soldier of the battalion to receive the award in 1945.

7 February 1945. The Soviets mount an assault north of Königsberg in East Prussia but their tanks are devastated by gunfire from the heavy cruisers Admiral Scheer and Lützow. Elements of 21.Panzer-Division open a corridor into Küstrin.

8 February 1945. Russian armoured units break out of the Oder Bridgehead north of Breslau. The first tanks of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501 arrive in Hungary near Raab, modern-day Gyor, north-west of Budapest.

10 February 1945. A Soviet attack towards Neustettin in Pomerania, today Szczecinek, is halted by a series of determined counterattacks. The last defenders of Budapest attempt to break out through the Russian encirclement but most are killed or captured. Oberfeldwebel Edmund Ratajczak, a platoon commander of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507, is awarded the Ritterkreuz for his actions in the fighting around Tuchler-Heide in East Prussia.

13 February 1945. The Russian declare Budapest secured. Red Army units enter Schneidemül in Pomerania.

14 February 1945. Breslau is cut off.

15 February 1945. Operation Sonnenwende, a limited assault to retake Arnswalde, about 35 kilometres south-east of Stargard, commences. Just two weak divisions of 11.SS-Panzerarmee are ready to take part in the attack.

16 February 1945. The remaining divisions of 11.Panzerarmee launch their attacks as part of Operation Sonnenwende but the offensive is brought to a standstill within 48 hours.

18 February 1945. Graudenz, modern-day Grudziadz in Poland, is surrounded.

19 February 1945. In East Prussia, German units open a corridor between Königsberg and Pillau on the Baltic coast enabling tens of thousands of German refugees to be evacuated.

20 February 1945. The fifth in a series of strong Soviet attacks against the German defences of Heeresgruppe Kurland is defeated.

23 February 1945. The garrison of Posen surrenders.

24 February 1945. A German counterattack, codenamed Operation Südwind, succeeds in wiping out the Soviet bridgehead at Gran on the Danube, north-east of Budapest. Among the units involved were the Tigers of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501 and schwere Panzer-Abteilung Feldherrnhalle.

26 February 1945. The units of Heeresgruppe Kurland hold back a Soviet attack at Prekuln.

A mid-production Tiger I of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507 photographed in late 1944 or early 1945. The battalion's unit insignia can be seen on the hull front to the right of the driver's visor. The markings employed by this unit are shown and discussed on page 17 of the Camouflage & Markings section.

A Tiger I tank, probably rebuilt using parts from several vehicles, of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424 abandoned in the streets of Czestochowa in Poland in early 1945. This tank is also shown and discussed on page 18 of the Camouflage & Markings section.

28 February 1945. Neustettin falls to the Russians. Frustrated by the determined defence of Heeresgruppe Kurland the Soviets suspend all offensive operations in the area. During this month two soldiers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510, Major Kurt Gilbert and

Feldwebel Hermann Jentzsch, were presented with the German Cross in Gold. Designed by Hitler, this medal was only awarded for repeated acts of bravery.

1 March 1945. The Germans recapture Lauban, east of Görlitz, completely destroying the Soviet units trapped there.

4 March 1945. The Russians break through the defensive lines around Stargard and push towards Stettin. On the same day Red Army units cross the Oder River south of Frankfurt.

5 March 1945. 2.Armee is cut off in Pomerania as the Russians reach the Baltic coast. The fortress city of Graudenz surrenders.

6 March 1945. Operation Frühlingserwachen, or Spring Awakening, the last major German offensive of the war, is launched from the area around Lake Balaton towards the Danube south of Budapest. Although the German force was strong, including the Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509, schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501 and SS-Panzer-Regiment 3, the advances of the first day were meagre.

8 March 1945. Around Lake Balaton elements of I.SS-Panzerkorps secure Nagy on the Budapest to Pecs road. On their right flank the division of I.Kavalleriekorps had reached the main road between Enying and Mezökomarom but, hampered by the weather and stiff Russian resistance, II.SS-Panzerkorps lagged dangerously behind. On the same day Red Army units fought their way into the southern suburbs of Breslau.

10 March 1945. The Russians capture the town of Sopot, today a northern suburb of Danzig. In Hungary units of I.SS-Panzerkorps and 23.Panzer-Divison closed on the Sarviz canal but II.SS-Panzerkorps was now 25 kilometres behind the lead elements inviting counterattack.

11 March 1945. Red Army units close on Gotenhafen in East Prussia, threatening the escape of thousands of German civilians.

13 March 1945. The Soviets launch an offensive against the Braunsberg Pocket south of Königsberg. All communication with

German units inside the pocket are cut on the following day.

16 March 1945. A massive Russian counter offensive on the front of IV.SS-Panzerkorps pushes back the German units south of Budapest. Realising the danger, the commander of 6.Armee orders I.SS-Panzerkorps to withdraw, prompting calls from the commander of II.SS-Panzerkorps to be allowed to pull his men back.

18 March 1945. At 1.40am Hitler gives permission for the formations south of Budapest to retreat, bringing an end to Operation Spring Awakening. In East Prussia, Kolberg finally falls to the Russians.

20 March 1945. Heeresgruppe Weichsel evacuates the bridgehead on the east bank of the Oder River at Stettin. On the same day the Braunsberg Pocket is overrun by the Russians.

21 March 1945. Around Lake Balaton the Germans are pushed back to Stuhlweissenburg.

23 March 1945. Red Army units fight their way into the outskirts of Danzig and Gotenhafen, modern-day Gdynia in Poland.

24 March 1945. The Soviets capture Neisse in Upper Silesia.

26 March 1945. German units abandon the defensive strongpoints around Papa and Devecser in Hungary which covered the approaches to the Austrian border. Himmler is relieved of his command of Heeresgruppe Weichsel and replaced by General Gotthard Heinrici.

27 March 1945. Russian units push towards the centre of Danzig but are forced to fight for every yard. German armoured units launch an attack towards Küstrin but are brought to a halt just a few kilometres short of their objective.

28 March 1945. Gotenhafen falls to the Russians.

29 March 1945. Küstrin finally falls to the Russians. On the same day the Hungarian oilfields south of Komorn, Germany's last source of petroleum, are taken by the Soviets.

30 March 1945. In a day of bitter reversals for the Germans, Danzig falls, Breslau and Glogau are encircled, Red Army units cross the Hungarian border into Austria and units of Heeresgruppe Weichsel evacuate their last remaining bridgehead on the Oder at Wollin, north of Stettin.

1 April 1945. Red Army units take Sopron in north-west Hungary and push on to Wiener Neustadt in Austria. Russian and Bulgarian units take Nagykanizsa, consolidating the Soviets' control of Hungary's oil reserves.

3 April 1945. Russian units break through the German defensive line between Wiener Neustadt and Neusiedler Lake south of Vienna. Soviet troops advance towards Bratislava on the Danube which falls on the following day.

6 April 1945. Preceded by a devastating artillery and air bombardment, the Russians begin their final assault against Königsberg. On the same day Red Army soldiers gained control of much of the eastern and southern suburbs of Vienna.

9 April 1945. General Otto Lasch, the commander of the Königsberg garrison, surrenders the town to the Russians. Within days General Lasch was sentenced to death for his actions.

10 April 1945. Any German units capable of movement slip out of Vienna under cover of darkness. Elements of 6.Armee continue to hold the Russians south of the city near Wiener Neustadt.

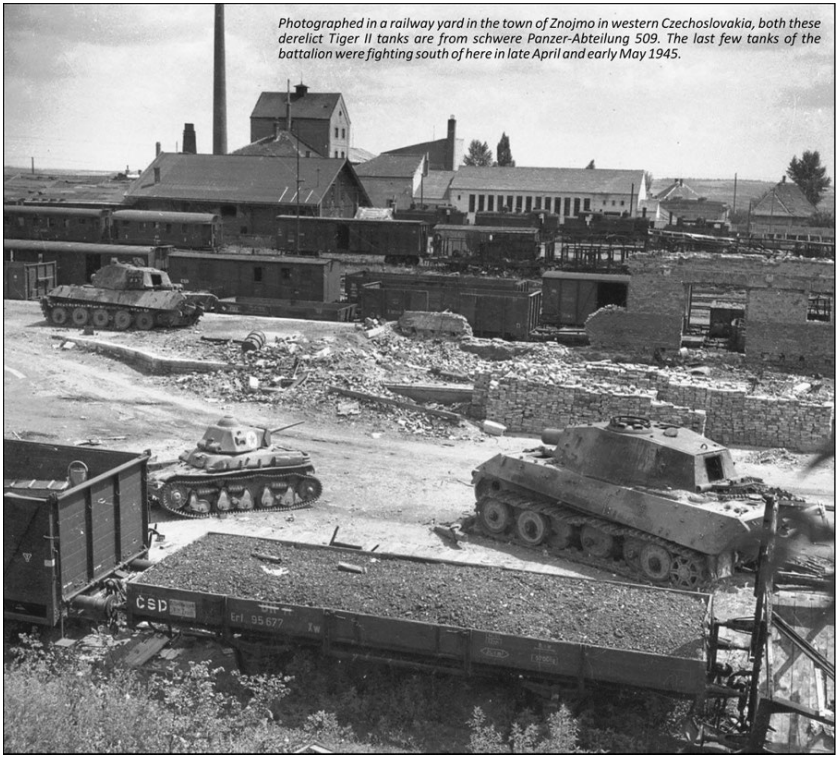
13 April 1945. The last few Germans in Vienna surrender.

14 April 1945. Heavy fighting at Frankfurt an der Oder.

16 April 1945. Russian offensive operations begin along the entire Oder-Neisse defensive line.

17 April 1945. The Russian offensive east of Berlin is stalled a few kilometres from the Oder River on the Seelow Heights. Oberleutnant Adolf Rinke, the commander of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502, is posthumously awarded the Ritterkreuz. Rinke was the last soldier of the battalion to receive

the award.



Photographed in a railway yard in the town of Znojmo in western Czechoslovakia, both these derelict Tiger II tanks are from schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. The last few tanks of the battalion were fighting south of here in late April and early May 1945.

Above and at right: The last Tiger tank of Panzer-Division Müncheberg photographed in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. This tank is shown and discussed on page 21 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

19 April 1945. Russian units finally break through the defences on the Seelow Heights. The German defenders of Frankfurt destroy the Oder bridge.

20 April 1945. For the first time Russian artillery shells fall on Berlin as desperate counterattacks are launched to the north and south of Frankfurt. In Czechoslovakia fighting continues near Ostrava and Brno.

22 April 1945. German troops begin withdrawing from Frankfurt an der Oder after destroying the railway bridges in Hindenburgstrasse and Güldendorfer Strasse. The following day Russian troops enter the city which was by then almost deserted. On the same day the Russians break into the northern and eastern suburbs of Berlin and Hitler announces to his staff that he will remain in the city.

25 April 1945. Russian troops complete the encirclement of Berlin while the suburbs of Tegel and Reinickendorf fall under their control. At Torgau on the Elbe, almost 100 kilometres to the west, Russian and American soldiers meet for the first time. A relief attempt launched from Eberswalde by elements of III. Panzerkorps is unsuccessful.

26 April 1945. Units of 12. Armee and XLI. Panzerkorps launch attacks to break through to Berlin. Stettin falls to the Russians.

28 April 1945. General Walter Wenck, the commander of 12.Armee, reports to OKW headquarters in Fürstenburg that any relief of Berlin is impossible. Instead Wenck attacks towards Halbe, south of Berlin, linking up with the survivors of 9.Armee and then leads his men towards the West. As darkness falls Russian tanks and infantrymen are fighting along the Wilhelmstrasse and near the Anhalt Station, less than 900 metres from the Führerbunker.

29 April 1945. In Berlin, fighting rages around the Reichstag, the Chancellery and along Potsdamer Strasse. Three members of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503 (Fritz Herzig, Oskar Schäfer

and Karl Körner) are awarded the Ritterkreuz on the authority of Brigadeführer Wilhelm Monhke who Hitler had personally appointed as commandant for the defence of the central government district of Berlin. Incredibly, around Cottbus, south-east of the capital, German troops are still holding the Russians back.

30 April 1945. At 2.30 pm Russian infantrymen raise a red flag over the Reichstag. Almost exactly one hour later Hitler commits suicide and General Krebs, who had replaced Guderian as chief of staff at OKH, requests an armistice which the Russians refuse. In Breslau the German garrison fights on having rejected an offer of surrender.

1 May 1945. Grossadmiral Dönitz, the new German head of state, orders that resistance continue in the East in an effort to save tens of thousands of German civilian refugees. Hauptmann Ernst-Nordewin von Diest-Körber, the commander of schwere Panzer-Abteilung Feldherrnhalle, is awarded the Ritterkreuz, the fourth and last member of the battalion to receive the medal. In 1991 the award was rescinded when it was discovered that the commander of 8.Armee, who recommended the award, did not have the authority to do so.

2 May 1945. General Helmuth Weidling, the commander of the Berlin garrison, accepts the terms of unconditional surrender. All fighting ceases at 3.00 pm.

3 May 1945. In Prague a civilian uprising is aided by 600. (Russische) Infanterie-Division which defected en masse.

6 May 1945. After a siege lasting eighty-two days the garrison of Breslau finally surrenders.

7 May 1945. Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, Chief of the Operations Staff of OKW, signs Germany's unconditional surrender. Operations on all fronts are to cease at one minute after midnight the following day.

8 May 1945. German artillery pounds the centre of Prague. Later in the day an agreement is reached with Czech insurgents for the

capitulation of the city.

9 May 1945. The last German units in Kurland surrender.

11 May 1945. Fighting continues in Moravia for four days until the last pockets of German resistance are crushed.

After the establishment of the first heavy tank battalions in late 1942 it was envisaged that each of the army's Panzer regiments would eventually contain a Tiger company. This scheme was partly implemented with the creation of heavy companies for the army's Grossdeutschland Division and for SS-Panzer-Regimenten 1, 2 and 3 but most of these units were later upgraded to battalion strength as explained here. During the early months of 1943 Tiger battalions were assigned to Panzer divisions as the third Abteilung of the division's Panzer regiment but experience in the field showed this to be impracticable and it was soon decided that the heavy tanks would operate as independent battalions. By the end of 1944 the army had raised ten independent Tiger battalions and schwere Panzer-Abteilung Grossdeutschland while three heavy battalions had been created for the Waffen-SS in addition to 9.Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 3. Those units which served on the Eastern Front in 1945 are listed below.

Notes

1. This unit was not the first of the heavy tank battalions created by the German Army, as is sometimes stated, although it was the first to receive an allocation of Tigers and the first to see combat.

2. The actions of 3.Kompanie on the Western Front are covered in detail in Tiger I & Tiger II: German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West 1945.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501. Formed in May 1942, the battalion's first and second companies served in Tunisia, surrendering to Allied forces almost exactly one year later. Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 was reformed in September 1943 under the command of Major Erich Löwe and served on the Eastern Front, losing all its tanks in the battles of summer 1944 but was once again rebuilt, this time with Tiger II tanks, and returned to the East in early August. The battalion spent the next months fighting around Baranow Sandomierski in southern Poland and on 21 December 1944 was renamed schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424. See also XXIV.Panzerkorps below.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502. Formed in May 1942, the first elements of the battalion were sent to the Russian Front in the following September and were continuously engaged in front-line operations for almost two years (1).

By late 1944 the battalion's tanks were fighting in the defence of the Baltic States as part of Heeresgruppe Nord and on 4 October were ordered to begin preparations to move to Germany to retrain on the Tiger II. But within less than a week Red Army units reached the Baltic coast near Memel, today Klaipeda in Lithuania, cutting off all the German units in the area and all transport was halted. The remaining eight Tigers of 3.Kompanie, under the command of Hauptmann Christoph Leonhardt, were attached to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510 while the thirteen tanks of the first and second companies were employed in the defence of the Memel bridgehead. By the end of October the crews without tanks, who had been fighting as infantry, were withdrawn to Danzig and on 12 November 1944 they were followed by Hauptmann Leonhardt's men who left their last six tanks with schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510.

The men of 3.Kompanie did not return to the East but did take part

in the fighting against the advancing Americans after taking charge of eight Tiger II tanks directly from the Henschel factory at Kassel (2). On 10 January 1945 the battalion was renamed schwere Panzer-Abteilung 511. The first and second companies remained in Memel until Sunday, 21 January when they were withdrawn to East Prussia by ferry with the first three tanks arriving at the port city of Pillau on the following Tuesday. The situation here was so dire that these Tigers, commanded by Leutnant Bernhard Nienstedt, were ordered into a night attack although they had neither fuel or ammunition. Wisely, Leutnant Nienstedt refused to obey the order and waited until 24 January when the bulk of 2.Kompanie had been landed.

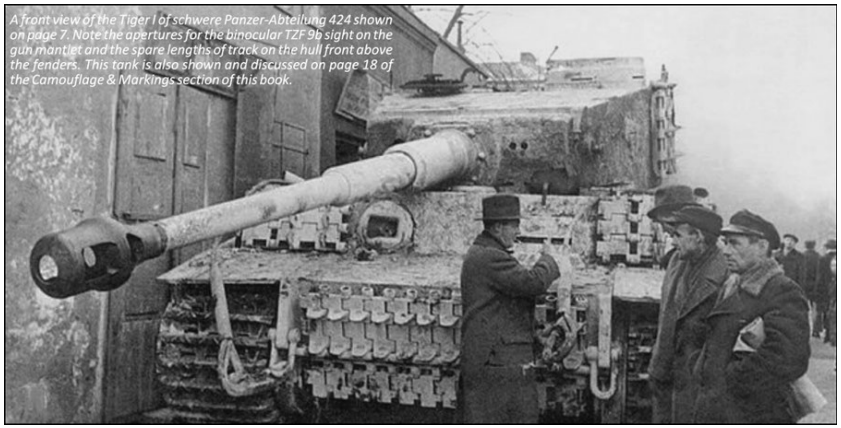
The fighting here and north of Königsberg, modern-day Kaliningrad, was extremely confused and the tanks operated for the most part in small groups of two or three supported by depleted infantry units and a single Tiger II of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. On at least two occasions the Tigers were forced to fight their way out of possible encirclement and the withdrawal towards Neuhausen, now Guryevsk, on 26 January 1945 was typical of these actions. While pulling back from Kadgiehnen, a small village near Labiau, the Tiger commanded by Unteroffizier Alfredo Carpaneto fell behind the main body due to mechanical difficulties and soon became involved in a firefight with a number of Soviet tanks. Although Carpaneto managed to destroy as many as four tanks his Tiger broke through the ice of a small pond and was forced to engage the approaching enemy with the turret turned completely to the rear. Carpaneto's tank was eventually towed free by another Tiger but by that time he had knocked out several more Soviet tanks. Later that day Carpaneto's tank was hit by a Russian anti-tank rifle and he was killed (1).

KAMPFGRUPPE PANZER-ABTEILUNG 501/424, LATE JANUARY 1945

Following the battles in the Kielce area and the withdrawal to

Czestochowa, the battalion's fuel supplies were totally exhausted and as there was no possibility of resupply all the surviving tanks were eventually destroyed by their crews. By 20 February 1945 the tank crews were at Grünberg, today Zielona Gora in western Poland, where they were used to form a company-sized Kampfgruppe built around a number of Panther and Pzkfw IV tanks with two Nashorn self-propelled 8.8cm anti-tank guns and unknown number of Jagdpanzer 38 tank destroyers. The last of these vehicles, a Pzkpfw IV tank, commanded by Oberfeldwebel Otto Arnold, formerly a platoon commander with 2.Kompanie, was reported to be in action on 28 January 1945 near Zedlitz, today Grabice in western Poland.

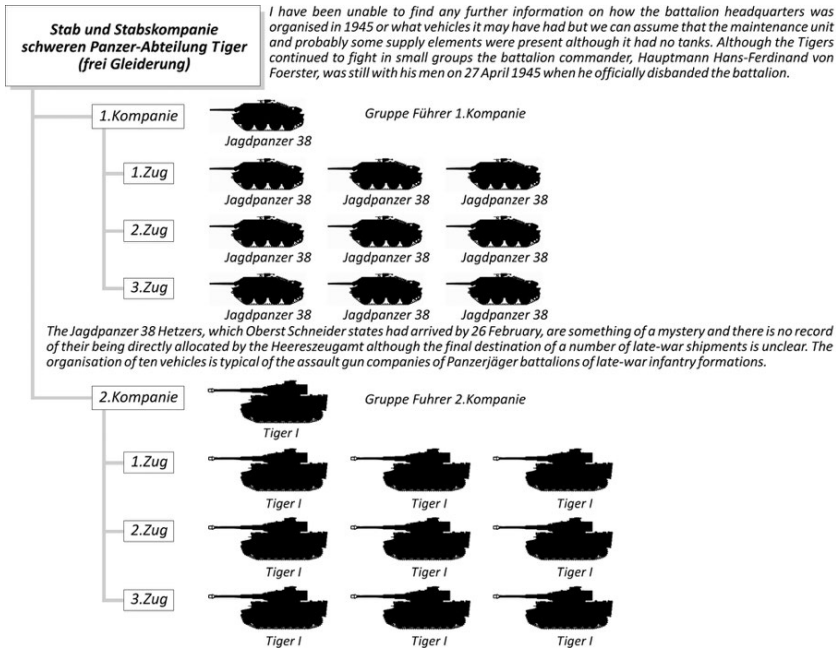
Most of these vehicles, if not all, were acquired form the maintenance facilities at Brieg, modern-day Brzeg in Poland. The number of Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzers shown above is pure speculation on my part and the exact number available is not known. It would seem logical that the company was organised into platoons based on type but that again is speculation. The last surviving crew members were transported to Germany from 5 February 1945 and the crews of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424 were used to form schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 512 which fought in the West until the end of the war.



A front view of the Tiger I of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424 shown on page 7. Note the apertures for the binocular TZF 9b sight on the gun mantlet and the spare lengths of track on the hull front above the fenders. This tank is also shown and discussed on page 18 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

SCHWERE PANZER-ABTEILUNG 502/511, MARCH 1945

For much of the early weeks of 1945 the few surviving tanks of the battalion operated as small Kampfgruppen under Leutnant Adolf Rinke, Leutnant Bernhard Nienstedt and Oberfeldwebel Kurt Goring. By 14 February 1945 the battalion's ten operational Tiger I tanks, which had been restored to running order by the maintenance unit, were concentrated in 2.Kompanie. These vehicles were either from the allocations made in early 1944 or assembled from parts taken from repair depots as no new Tiger I tanks were shipped by the Heereszeugamt after February 1944. The battalion's 3.Kompanie had returned to Germany in December 1944 after handing over the last of its tanks to schwere panzer-Abteilung 510. The official Heereszeugamt allocation lists mention that three Tiger II tanks were shipped to the battalion on 30 January 1945 but this may have been in anticipation of the battalion returning to Germany and in any case they were eventually handed over to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507 which was training at Sennelager.


Stab und Stabskompanie schweren Panzer-Abteilung Tiger (frei Gleiderung)
I have been unable to find any further information on how the battalion headquarters was organised in 1945 or what vehicles it may have had but we can assume that the maintenance unit and probably some supply elements were present although it had no tanks. Although the Tigers continued to fight in small groups the battalion commander, Hauptmann Hans-Ferdinand von Foerster, was still with his men on 27 April 1945 when he officially disbanded the battalion.
1.Kompanie
Jagdpanzer 38
Gruppe Führer 1.Kompanie
1.Zug
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
2.Zug
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
3.Zug
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
Jagdpanzer 38
The Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzers, which Oberst Schneider states had arrived by 26 February, are something of a mystery and there is no record of their being directly allocated by the Heereszeugamt although the final destination of a number of late-war shipments is unclear. The organisation of ten vehicles is typical of the assault gun companies of Panzerjäger battalions of late-war infantry formations.
2.Kompanie
Tiger I
Gruppe Fuhrer 2.Kompanie
1.Zug
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
2.Zug
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
3.Zug
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I

Notes

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1. Oberst Schneider's claim that Carpaneto was responsible for the destruction of fifteen Soviet T-34/85 and JS-2 tanks on this day is entirely possible but almost every account of this action differs. Unteroffizier Carpaneto, who suffered from typhus but refused to leave his crew, was posthumously awarded the Ritterkreuz.

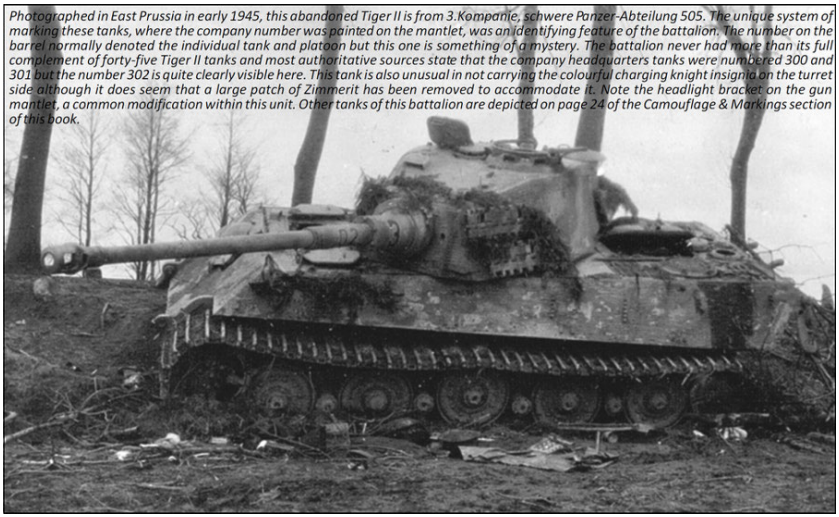
On 19 February 1945, as part of a Kampfgruppe consisting of elements of Panzerjäger-Abteilung 158, ten Tigers of the battalion led by Leutnant Adolf Rinke took part in an attempt to link up with the German units trying to break out of Königsberg and although they were initially held up at Wischehnen, a surprise attack was able to push as far as the farming community of Kragua. At the same time three tanks under Oberfeldwebel Kurt Göring were supporting the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 31 in an attack on the

airfield at Seerappen, present-day Lyublino, a few kilometres to the north. These attacks achieved very little and Rinke and Göring's groups were separated until 26 February 1945. On that day all the surviving Tigers were concentrated in 2.Kompanie and 1. Kompanie was re-equipped with Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer tank destroyers.

On 13 April 1945 the Soviets launched a major offensive north of Königsberg and within days 2.Kompanie had been reduced to seven serviceable Tigers while 2. Kompanie was almost completely destroyed in the fighting to defend Palmnicken on the Baltic coast. Despite a number of local successes, such as the relief of Lochstädt Castle, just two Tigers were able to take part in the defensive operations along the Frishe Nehrung peninsula that screened the German withdrawal and on 27 April 1945, after fighting all morning around Nickelswalde, the last Tiger inexplicably exploded while the crew were taking a break. Later that day Hauptmann von Foerster officially disbanded the battalion.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503. See Panzerkorps-Feldherrnhalle below.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. Formed on 29 January 1943, this unit was originally intended for service in North Africa but within less than a month the orders had been changed to organise the battalion for deployment to the East. During 1944 schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505 took part in the battles in modern-day Belarus and Ukraine and towards the end of the year the Tigers were operating in Lithuania and East Prussia attached to Fallschirm-Panzerkorps Hermann Göring. Although the fighting here was unrelenting, the battalion lost just four tanks as complete write-offs. The battalion spent the remainder of the year repairing and refitting its tanks as the operational reserve of XXXIX.Panzerkorps.



Photographed in East Prussia in early 1945, this abandoned Tiger II is from 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. The unique system of marking these tanks, where the company number was painted on the mantlet, was an identifying feature of the battalion. The number on the barrel normally denoted the individual tank and platoon but this one is something of a mystery. The battalion never had more than its full complement of forty-five Tiger II tanks and most authoritative sources state that the company headquarters tanks were numbered 300 and 301 but the number 302 is quite clearly visible here. This tank is also unusual in not carrying the colourful charging knight insignia on the turret side although it does seem that a large patch of Zimmerit has been removed to accommodate it. Note the headlight bracket on the gun mantlet, a common modification within this unit. Other tanks of this battalion are depicted on page 24 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

In early 1945 schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505 returned to the front and was initially held in reserve near Gross Jägersdorf, present-day Gvardeisk, in anticipation of a Russian offensive. By 21 January 1945 the Tigers were supporting the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 31 in a counterattack to regain ground around the Norkitten Brigdehead west of Insterburg, today Chernyakhovsk. But within two days the Germans had been pushed back and the fighting continued to ebb back and forth to the south and west of Königsberg, which was surrounded by the end of the month and could only be supplied by sea.

By the first week of February 1945 the battalion had lost nineteen tanks, either to enemy action or mechanical failure. In addition two Tigers simply went missing in action and one was cannibalised in order to keep the others running. Although four Tiger I tanks had been taken over from schwere Panzer-Abteilung 511 in late January, and these were still operational, this total meant the battalion was little more than a full-strength company.

On 17 February 1945 the remaining tanks were ordered to break

through the Russian lines towards Pillau on the Baltic coast but the following day the tanks were on the western edge of the Königsberg defensive perimeter and continued fighting there until 15 April 1945 when the last two Tigers, under the command of Oberfeldwebel Heinz Mausberg, were destroyed by their crews near Fischhausen, modern-day Primorsk.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507. Originally formed in May 1943, the battalion went through a number of reorganisations before it was eventually sent to the Eastern Front in March 1944.

The battalion spent much of 1944 fighting in what is today Ukraine and Poland and by the end of the year was attached to XXIII. Armeekorps as an operational reserve near Zichenau in East Prussia, now Ciechanow in Poland. In early February 1945 the second and third companies were transferred to Truppenübungsplatz Sennelager in Germany to be re-equipped with the Tiger II, while 1.Kompanie remained at the front for some weeks with just two operational tanks. By 24 March these two Tigers had also been lost and the crews of 1.Kompanie were eventually moved to Hameln in Germany.

By 17 April 1945 what remained of the battalion had been moved to Truppenübungsplatz Milowitz in Czechoslovakia to be rebuilt but received only ten Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer tank destroyers which were allocated to 3.Kompanie. At the same time the battalion was renamed Panzer-Abteilung 507.

Battling Czech insurgents and pursued by the Red Army, most of the men were able to fight their way to the American lines near Most in what is today the Czech Republic but were handed back to the Soviets. The actions of the battalion's second and third companies in the West are covered in detail in Tiger I & Tiger II:

German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West 1945.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. Established on 9 September 1943, the battalion received a full complement of forty-five Tiger tanks and went into action for the first time on 7 November north-east of Kolomyia in western Ukraine in support of 2. SS-Panzergrenadier-Division.

The battalion took part in the battles in Ukraine and Poland and on 8 September 1944 the remaining tanks were handed over to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 and the crews were transferred to Senne in Germany to be re-equipped with the Tiger II. Under the command of Major Hans-Jürgen Burmester, the battalion returned to the East in mid-January 1945 and took part in the Konrad series of offensives between Budapest and Lake Balaton at first directly attached to SS-Panzer-Regiment3.

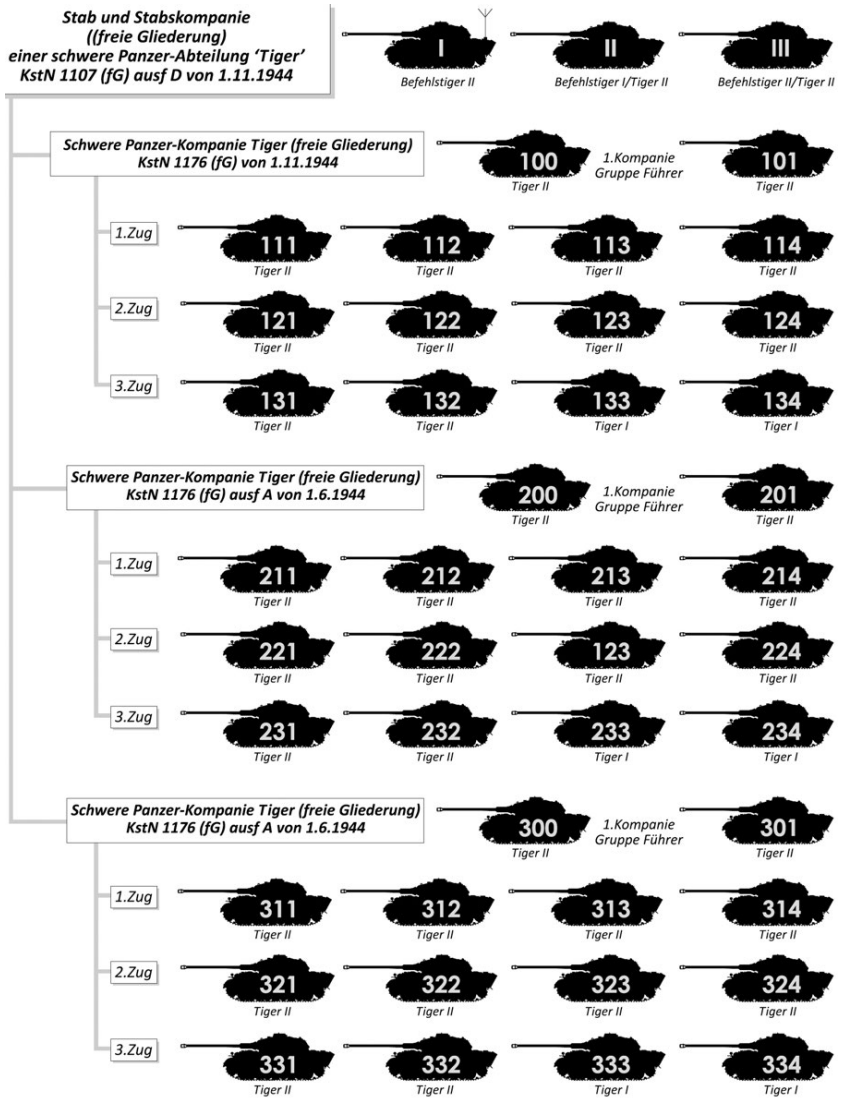
Although the assaults were brought to an end by 26 January the battalion remained in the area west of Budapest where the Tigers were employed in company-sized groups supporting various infantry units. After an action to seize a Russian strongpoint between the villages of Sarosd and Szabadegyhaza every tank was in need of extensive repair and the battalion was withdrawn from the front for almost a week. But by that time the German units in Hungary were in retreat, first towards the northern shore of Lake Balaton, and by 31 March 1945 the Austrian frontier had been reached. During the withdrawal the battalion had been forced to destroy fourteen serviceable tanks due to a total lack of fuel.

On Sunday, 1 April the remaining tanks reached Gleisdorf and the battalion was reformed as a Kampfgruppe containing two companies of tanks and one of infantry. On the following Thursday five Tigers were handed over from schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung

501 and this brought the total to eighteen although just eight of these were considered operational. On 13 April 1945 the battalion was moved by rail to Sankt Pölten, east of Vienna, and then made their way to Laa an der Thaya, on the Czech border south of Brno. Due to the rapid Soviet advance the original plan to deploy the Tigers here was dropped and by the end of the month the tanks were conducting a fighting withdrawal across Northern Austria.

SCHWERE PANZER-ABTEILUNG 509, JANUARY 1945

In early September 1944 the battalion handed all its remaining Tiger I tanks to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 and the crews returned to Germany. By 1 January 1945 a total of forty-five Tiger II tanks had been received, the full complement, and the battalion was transferred to Hungary, arriving in Bratislava two weeks later. All formations of the German Army were organised according to detailed tables of establishment referred to as Kriegstärkenachweisung (KstN) which showed the official composition of a unit, listing the exact number of personnel and type of equipment from vehicles to small arms. I have assumed here that the battalion was organised using the KstN that were introduced on 1 November 1944 issued for units that were formed or refurbished from that time but it is entirely possible that the earlier establishment was retained. In any case the number of tanks was unchanged. Although each battalion was authorised three Befehlstiger command tanks I have only been able to confirm the presence of one from the available photographic evidence.



On 8 May 1945, the very last day of the war, the battalion's five surviving Tigers took part in a counterattack near Kapplitz, modern day Kaplice in the Czech Republic, on the Moldau River. On the following day the remaining crews surrendered to units of the US Army.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510. Formed on 6 June 1944 from elements of the Kompanieführer-Schule Versailles and Panzer-Ersatz-Abteilung 500, the battalion served on the Eastern Front, fighting through the Baltic States.

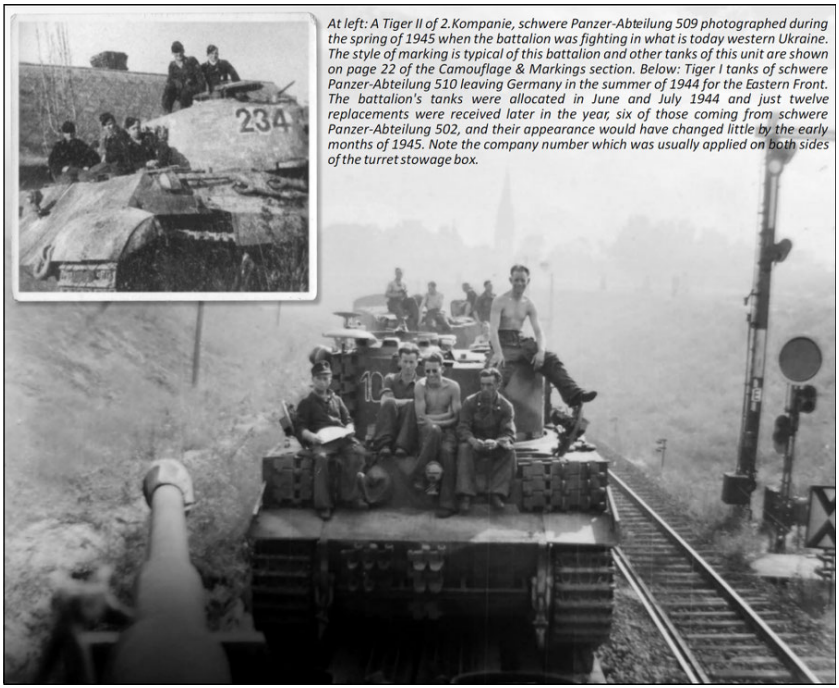
In mid-January 1945 the battalion's 3.Kompanie was transferred to Germany to train on the Tiger II and did not return to the East. At the same time the first and second companies, with twenty-two serviceable tanks, were transported by rail to Frauenberg and then Ilmaja. The tanks formed part of Panzer-Brigade Kurland and supported 14.Panzer-Division in the defensive battles in Latvia between Priekule and Libau, modern-day Liepaja, until 19 March 1945 when most of the crews were transferred to Germany.

The surviving fifteen Tigers were formed into a single company under the command of Leutnant Wise, a platoon commander of 1.Kompanie, and these were still on hand as late as 15 April 1945. The Tigers were not evacuated from the Kurland Pocket and the last vehicle was destroyed by its own crew on 8 May 1945 before the survivors of the battalion surrendered to the Russians.

The actions of the battalion's third company in the West are covered in detail in Tiger I & II: German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West 1945.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 511. See schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502 above.

Panzer-Regiment Grossdeutschland (GD). See Panzerkorps-GD below.

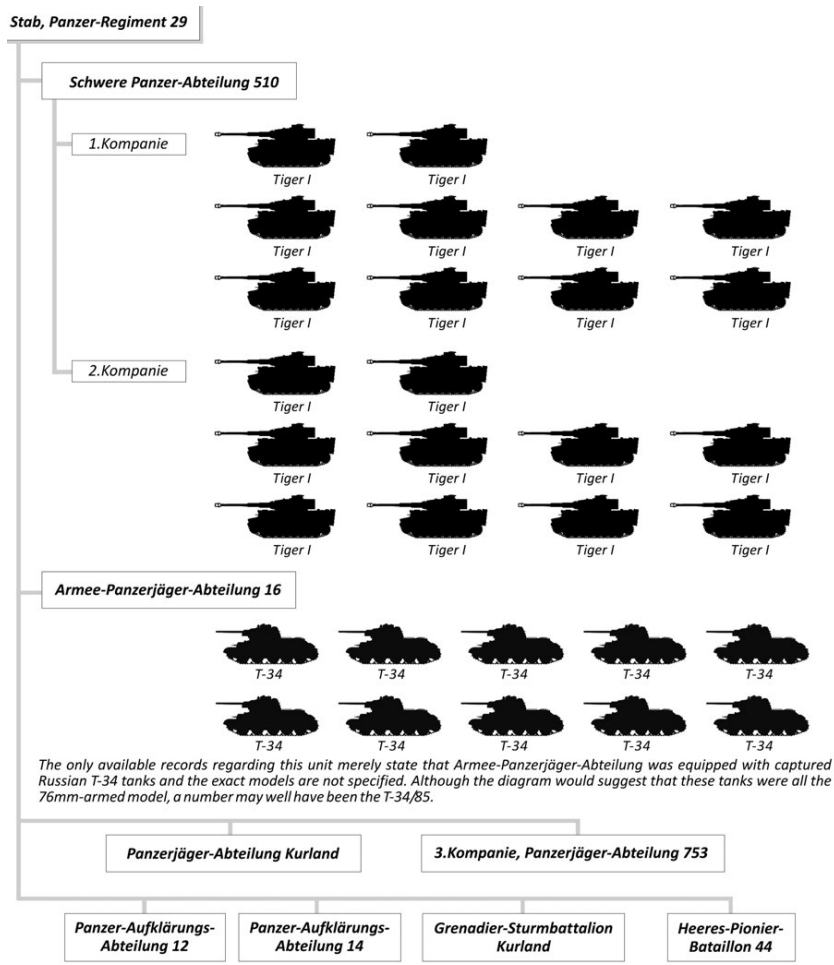


At left: A Tiger II of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509 photographed during the spring of 1945 when the battalion was fighting in what is today western Ukraine. The style of marking is typical of this battalion and other tanks of this unit are shown on page 22 of the Camouflage & Markings section. Below: Tiger I tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510 leaving Germany in the summer of 1944 for the Eastern Front. The battalion's tanks were allocated in June and July 1944 and just twelve replacements were received later in the year, six of those coming from schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502, and their appearance would have changed little by the early months of 1945. Note the company number which was usually applied on both sides of the turret stowage box.

PANZER-BRIGADE KURLAND, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1945

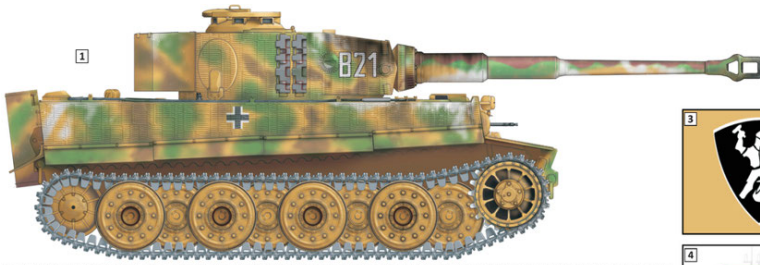
Formed in January 1945, this unit was originally referred to as Panzer-Aufklärungs-Gruppe Kurland and was intended as an emergency reserve forl6.Armee. Initially, it probably consisted of the reconnaissance battalions of 12.Panzer-Division and 14.Panzer-Division and the assets of these units must have been meagre as they were originally subordinated to the ad-hoc Grenadier-Sturm Battalion Kurland. On 15 January the remaining companies of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510 joined the brigade and reported that twenty-two tanks were on hand. Schneider states clearly that this was the full complement and I have assumed the organisation shown here. The tank crews of the battalion's 3.Kompanie had been transferred to Germany by 21 January and did not return to the Eastern Front. At various time a Luftwaffe Flak unit, equipped with 8.8cm guns, was also attached to Panzer-Brigade Kurland and some sources suggest that the brigade contained two Pionier battalions. The brigade went into action for the first time in late

February 1945 in the area around Bunka, about 40 kilometres south-east of Libau in Latvia, and remained in the Kurland basin area, surrendering to the Soviets in May 1945.

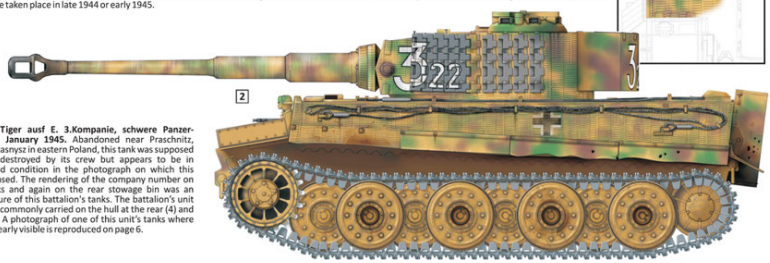

Stab, Panzer-Regiment 29
Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 510
1.Kompanie
Tiger I
2.Kompanie
Tiger I
Armee-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 16
T-34
The only available records regarding this unit merely state that Armee-Panzerjäger-Abteilung was equipped with captured Russian T-34 tanks and the exact models are not specified. Although the diagram would suggest that these tanks were all the 76mm-armed model, a number may well have been the T-34/85.
Panzerjäger-Abteilung Kurland
3.Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 753
Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 12
Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 14
Grenadier-Sturmbattalion Kurland
Heeres-Pionier-Bataillon 44

Panzerjäger-Abteilung Kurland is reported to have had as many as thirty Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer tank destroyers on hand which was enough vehicles to build three companies under KstN 1149 Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung (in Panzerjäger-Abteilung) (10 oder 14 Geschützen von 1.2.1944). This organisation was commonly used by Volksgrenadier divisions suggesting that the companies were detached from other formations as the reconnaissance battalions were. The inclusion of

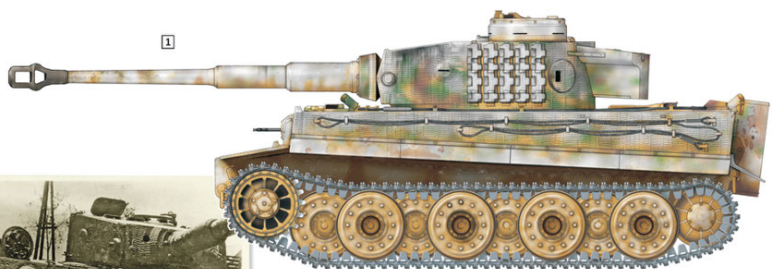
3.Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung is somewhat speculative is based on a report that the battalion, which was in this area, relinquished its third company.



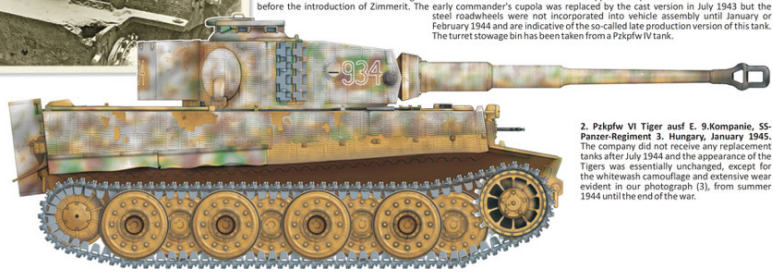
1. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung Grossdeutschland. East Prussia, spring 1945. From 13 December 1944, when the battalion was detached from its parent division, the company numbers were changed from 9, 10 and 11 to 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The system of employing the letters A, B and C to identify the companies was retained with the following number signifying the platoon and individual vehicle, here the first tank of the second platoon. Most photographs show these markings as solid black letters and numbers but the image on which this illustration is based is quite clear and the change to white with a black outline may have taken place in late 1944 or early 1945.



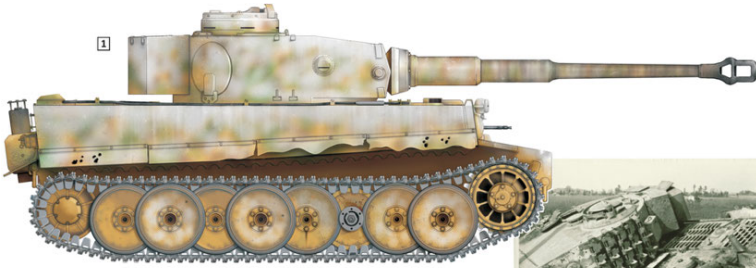
2. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507. January 1945. Abandoned near Praschnitz, modern-day Przasnysz in eastern Poland, this tank was supposed to have been destroyed by its crew but appears to be in reasonably good condition in the photograph on which this illustration is based. The rendering of the company number on the spare tracks and again on the rear stowage bin was an identifying feature of this battalion's tanks. The battalion's unit insignia (3) was commonly carried on the hull at the rear (4) and often the front. A photograph of one of this unit's tanks where the insignia is clearly visible is reproduced on page 6.



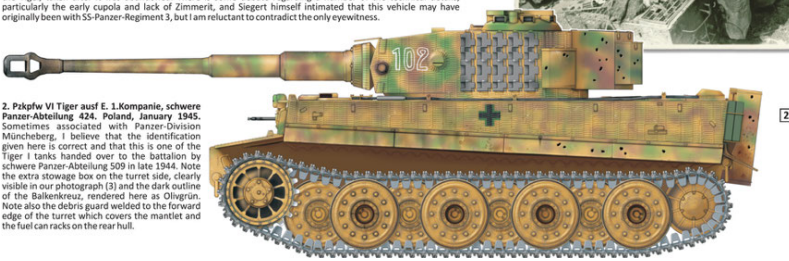
1. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424. Poland, January 1945. Photographed in the town of Czestochowa, north-west of Cracow, this Tiger has a number of unusual features which may indicate that it was rebuilt from a number of different vehicles. The S-Mine dischargers at the front and rear of the hull were dropped from production in June 1943 months before the introduction of Zimmerit. The early commander's cupola was replaced by the cast version in July 1943 but the steel roadwheels were not incorporated into vehicle assembly until January or February 1944 and are indicative of the so-called late production version of this tank. The turret stowage bin has been taken from a Pzkpfw IV tank.



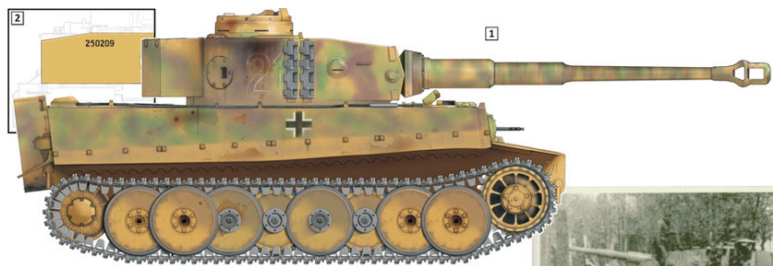
2. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. 9.Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 3. Hungary, January 1945. The company did not receive any replacement tanks after July 1944 and the appearance of the Tigers was essentially unchanged, except for the whitewash camouflage and extensive wear evident in our photograph (3), from summer 1944 until the end of the war.



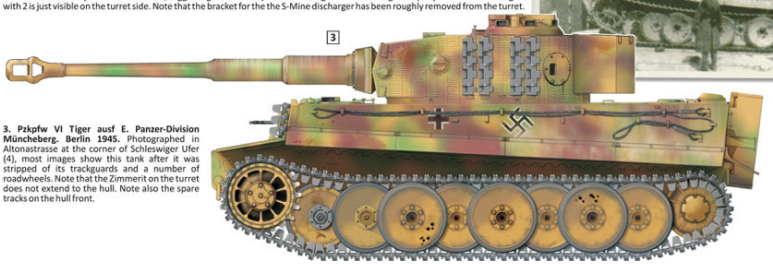
1. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. Panzerstoss-Reserve-Posen. Festung Posen, January 1945. As discussed in the main text a scale model of this vehicle was presented to Herr Richard Siegert who served in the unit's only Tiger, briefly commanding it until the city's surrender. This illustration is based on that model and the only known photograph of the Tiger, taken after it was abandoned. There is some debate regarding a number of the technical details, particularly the early cupola and lack of Zimmerit, and Siegert himself intimated that this vehicle may have originally been with SS-Panzer-Regiment 3, but I am reluctant to contradict the only eyewitness.



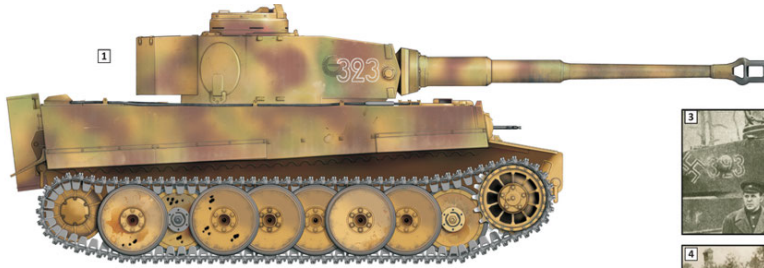
2. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. 1.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424. Poland, January 1945. Sometimes associated with Panzer-Division Müncheberg, I believe that the identification given here is correct and that this is one of the Tiger I tanks handed over to the battalion by schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509 in late 1944. Note the extra stowage box on the turret side, clearly visible in our photograph (3) and the dark outline of the Balkenkreuz, rendered here as Olivgrün. Note also the debris guard welded to the forward edge of the turret which covers the mantlet and the fuel can racks on the rear hull.



1. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. Unit unidentified. Berlin, April 1945. Based on a photograph taken after the end of the war, this may be another of the Tigers of Panzer-Division Müncheberg. The Fahrgestellenummer (Fgst Nr) on the hull front (2) is somewhat unclear but is almost certainly 250205 or 250209 indicating a May 1943 production vehicle. But the pistol port in the turret side was discontinued as early as December 1942, suggesting that this may not be the original turret. A large company number which begins with 2 is just visible on the turret side. Note that the bracket for the the S-Mine discharger has been roughly removed from the turret.

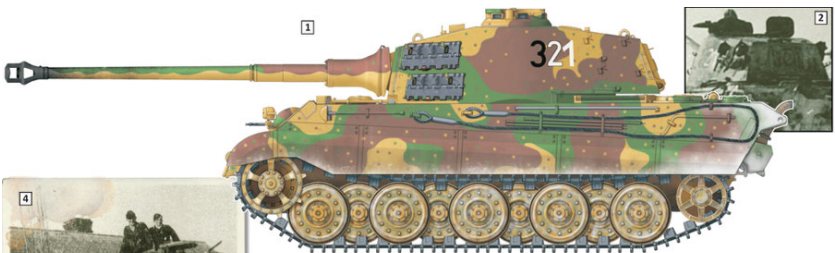


3. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. Panzer-Division Müncheberg. Berlin 1945. Photographed in Altonastrasse at the corner of Schleswiger Ufer (4), most images show this tank after it was stripped of its trackguards and a number of roadwheels. Note that the Zimmerit on the turret does not extend to the hull. Note also the spare tracks on the hull front.



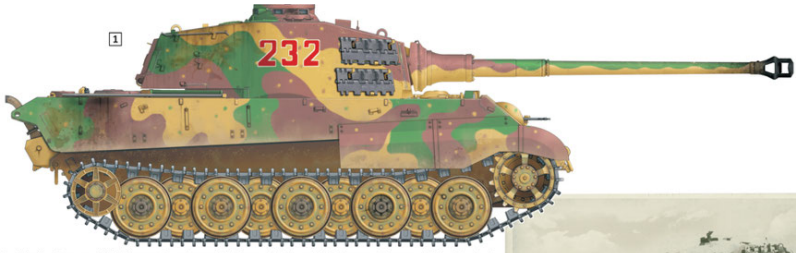
1 and 2. Pzkpfw VI Tiger ausf E. Panzer-Division Müncheberg. Berlin, April 1945. Both profiles on this page depict the division's last serviceable Tiger which was abandoned in the Tiergarten close to the Brandenburg Gate at the city's centre. This vehicle was photographed from several angles and it is clear that the Hakenkreuz marking was only applied to the left side of the turret. This can also be seen in our photograph (3). I do not agree with the suggestion that this was added by the Soviets after the conclusion of the fighting or that the image has been retouched. I believe that this marking was used by the Germans as a quick and easily identifiable recognition device, essential when so many of the defenders were inexperienced Hitler Youth or Volkssturm members to which one tank would look much the same as another. It was certainly applied to some of the Panthers of Kampfgruppe Käther which also fought around the city (4).

This is an early production vehicle assembled at some time after December 1942 when the turret escape hatch was introduced and prior to September 1943 when the application of Zimmerit began. Note that there is only one track hanger on the turret left side suggesting that these may have been a later addition and it should be remembered that these tanks were taken from the testing facility at Kummersdorf.



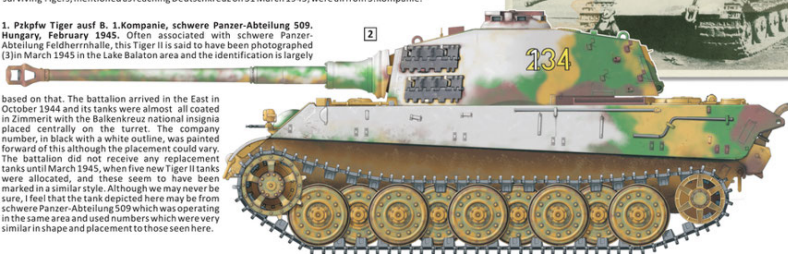
1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. Hungary, January 1945. Photographed shortly after the battalion arrived on the Eastern Front, this tank is unusual, perhaps unique, in the style used to depict the company number. Note that it is repeated in solid black on the turret rear access door (2). The rear surfaces of the hull do appear to be white in the photograph on which this illustration is based but that is likely due to snow and frost and is not camouflage paint.

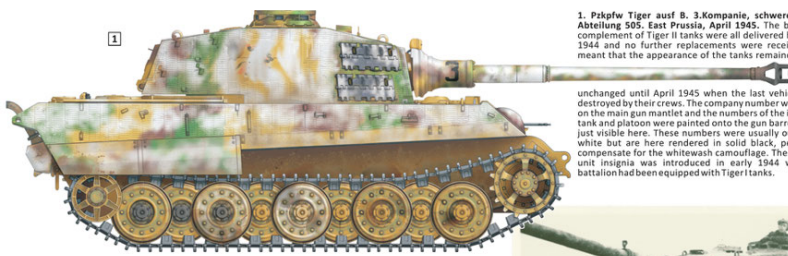
3. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. Hungary, February 1945. It seems that by February the battalion's Tigers had been thoroughly covered in whitewash camouflage with the numbers neatly applied in black. This can also be seen in our photograph (4). This also illustrates how easily the coat of whitewash could be worn away. The tank shown here, number 231, was disabled and abandoned after the battles in the area between Lake Balaton and Budapest.



1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 2.Kompanie, schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501. Hungary, January 1945. This tank, commanded by Unterscharführer Ewald Mölly, was one of the Tiger II tanks allocated to the battalion between October and December 1944 and one of the survivors of the Ardennes Offensive. The battalion arrived in the East with thirty-six tanks and most seem to have been painted in some version of the so-called ambush camouflage scheme depicted here. I have not been able to determine the fate of this vehicle but it appears that the battalion's last three surviving Tigers, mentioned as reaching Deutschkreuz on 31 March 1945, were all from 3.Kompanie.

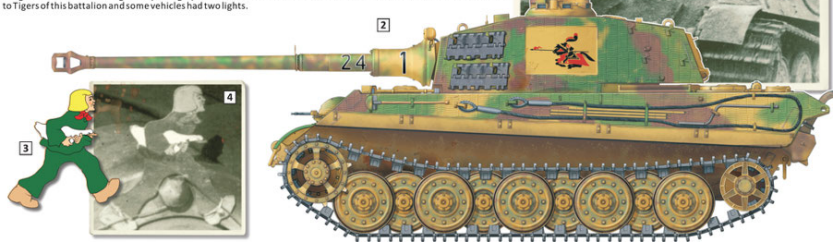
1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 1.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. Hungary, February 1945. Often associated with schwere Panzer-Abteilung Feldherrnhalle, this Tiger II is said to have been photographed (3)in March 1945 in the Lake Balaton area and the identification is largely based on that. The battalion arrived in the East in October 1944 and its tanks were almost all coated in Zimmerit with the Balkenkreuz national insignia placed centrally on the turret. The company number, in black with a white outline, was painted forward of this although the placement could vary. The battalion did not receive any replacement tanks until March 1945, when five new Tiger II tanks were allocated, and these seem to have been marked in a similar style. Although we may never be sure, I feel that the tank depicted here may be from schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509 which was operating in the same area and used numbers which were very similar in shape and placement to those seen here.

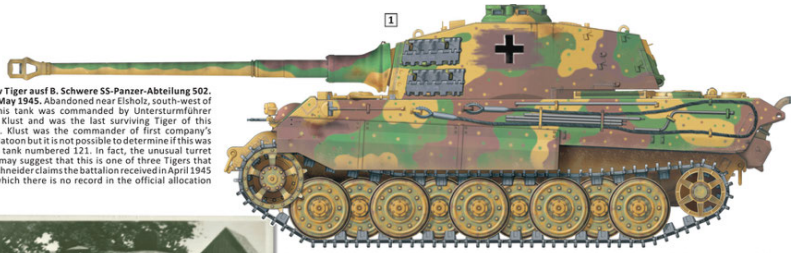




1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. East Prussia, April 1945. The battalion's complement of Tiger II tanks were all delivered by August 1944 and no further replacements were received. This meant that the appearance of the tanks remained almost unchanged until April 1945 when the last vehicles were destroyed by their crews. The company number was carried on the main gun mantlet and the numbers of the individual tank and platoon were painted onto the gun barrel and are just visible here. These numbers were usually outlined in white but are here rendered in solid black, perhaps to compensate for the whitewash camouflage. The colourful unit insignia was introduced in early 1944 when the battalion had been equipped with Tiger I tanks.

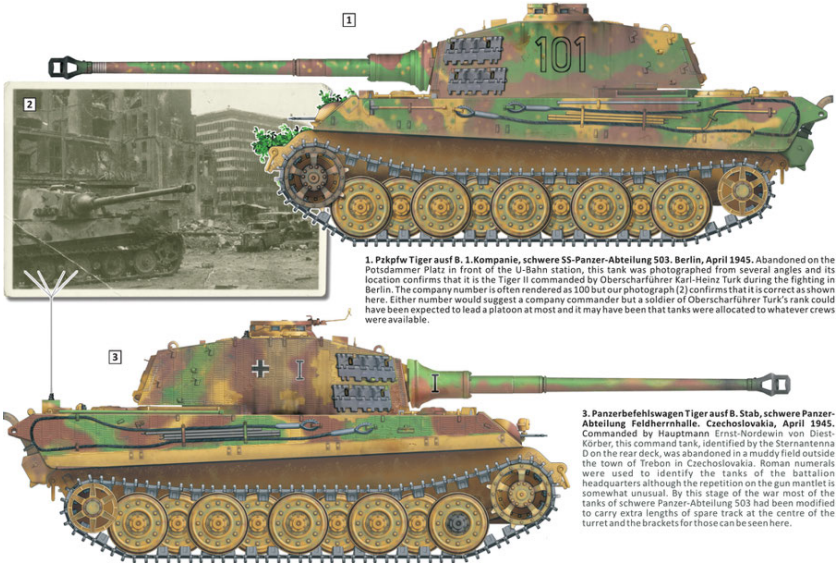
2. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 1.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. East Prussia, April 1945. This tank was featured in *Tiger I & Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS, Eastern Front 1944*, the first book in this series, and shown from a different angle. It has changed little from the late summer of 1944, except for the extensive wear. Note that the storybook figure of Hans im Glück (3), which had been fixed to the forward edge of the gun mantlet (4), has been moved further along the barrel. The position is somewhat clearer in our photograph (5). Note also the Bosch headlight fitted to the gun mantlet. It is missing in our photograph but the bracket can still be seen. This was a common modification made to Tigers of this battalion and some vehicles had two lights.





1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. Schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 502. Küstrin, May 1945. Abandoned near Elsholz, south-west of Berlin, this tank was commanded by Untersturmführer Wilhelm Klust and was the last surviving Tiger of this battalion. Klust was the commander of first company's second platoon but it is not possible to determine if this was his usual tank numbered 121. In fact, the unusual turret marking may suggest that this is one of three Tigers that Oberst Schneider claims the battalion received in April 1945 but for which there is no record in the official allocation lists.

2. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. Unit uncertain. Poland, spring 1945. Often associated with schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 502 and the battles on the Oder Front, I believe that this tank is in fact one of the Tigers lost by schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424 around Lisow in Poland much earlier in the year. This vehicle has some connection with the Tiger I, with company number 102, depicted on page 19 and has been positively identified as the Tiger II tank which can be seen in the background of the accompanying photograph. The image at left (3) shows a tank of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 502 abandoned after the fighting at Küstrin and shows the style and placement of the number and Balkenkreuz typically seen on Tigers of that unit.



1. Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B. 1. Kompanie, schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503. Berlin, April 1945. Abandoned on the Potsdammer Platz in front of the U-Bahn station, this tank was photographed from several angles and its location confirms that it is the Tiger II commanded by Oberscharführer Karl-Heinz Turk during the fighting in Berlin. The company number is often rendered as 100 but our photograph (2) confirms that it is correct as shown here. Either number would suggest a company commander but a soldier of Oberscharführer Turk's rank could have been expected to lead a platoon at most and it may have been that tanks were allocated to whatever crews were available.

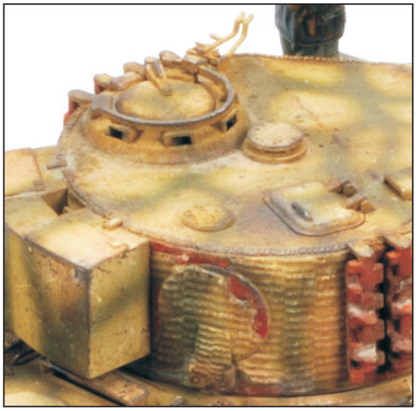
3. Panzerbefehlswagen Tiger ausf B. Stab, schwere Panzer-Abteilung Feldherrnhalle. Czechoslovakia, April 1945. Commanded by Hauptmann Ernst-Nordewin von Diest-Körber, this command tank, identified by the Sternantenna D on the rear deck, was abandoned in a muddy field outside the town of Trebon in Czechoslovakia. Roman numerals were used to identify the tanks of the battalion headquarters although the repetition on the gun mantlet is somewhat unusual. By this stage of the war most of the tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 had been modified to carry extra lengths of spare track at the centre of the turret and the brackets for those can be seen here.

PZKPFW VI TIGER AUSF E

1/48 SCALE

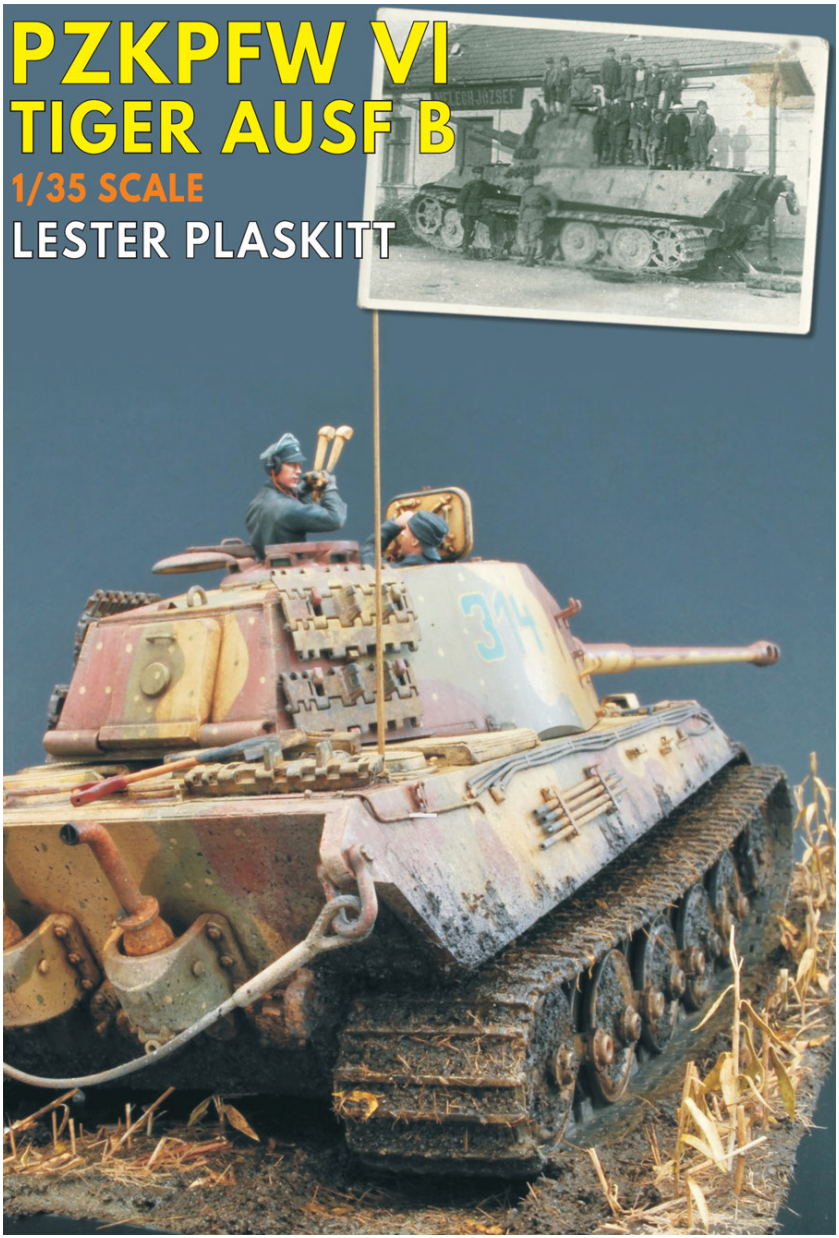
JOSE LUIS LÓPEZ RUIZ

Jose Luis' model is based on the Tamiya 1/48 scale Tiger I Late Production kit with Zimmerit added using the plastic detail sheets of Zimmerit texture, also from Tamiya. The completed model was painted with Tamiya acrylics and weathered with Ammo by Mig washes, filters and pigments.

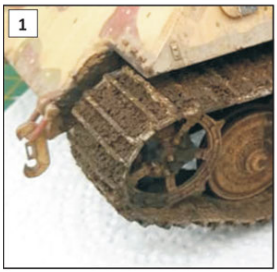


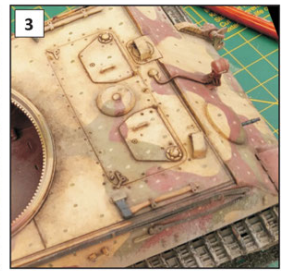
The resin base is from Brown Box Models, detailed using natural products such as branches, earth, sand and gravel. Once completed it was painted with Tamiya acrylics. The crew figure is from Alpine Miniatures.

PZKPFW VI
TIGER AUSF B
1/35 SCALE
LESTER PLASKITT



Lester's 1/35 scale model first appeared in TankCraft 13, Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS The Last Battles in the West 1945, *as shown at left. This tank, of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501, survived the fighting in the Ardennes in late 1944 and went to Hungary in February 1945 with the remnants of the battalion.*





Lester reworked the model with extensive weathering and added crew figures to depict the tank as it would have looked in the battles of spring 1945. The model was weathered with washes and texture from AK Interactive. The corn stalks were made from brush bristles and leaves cut from paper painted with water colours.

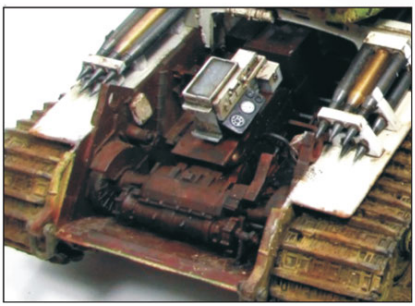
Below: The completely reworked model on its base. Above, details of Lester's Tiger II model: 1. Mud and dirt applied to the underside and rear hull below the exhaust guards. 2. Tracks, fender and hull front and the delicate stalks, applied individually. 3. A rear view showing the muddied tracks and Lester's attention to detail in the leaves mixed with the mud. 4. The Russian foxhole that is part of the base. Note the plant roots. 5. The commander, complete with Scherenfernrohr binoculars. 6. The loader in his hatch.

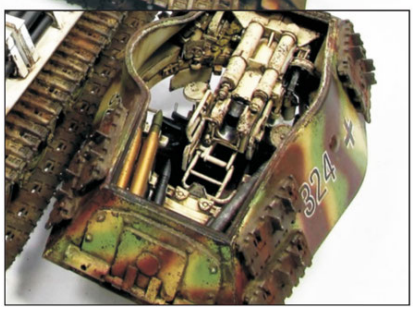
PZKPFW VI
TIGER AUSF B

PORSCHE TURRET AND
HENSCHEL TURRET

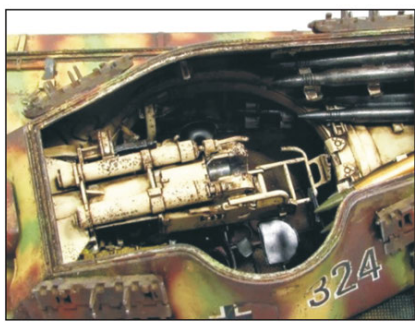
1/35 SCALE

XUÂN HÀ

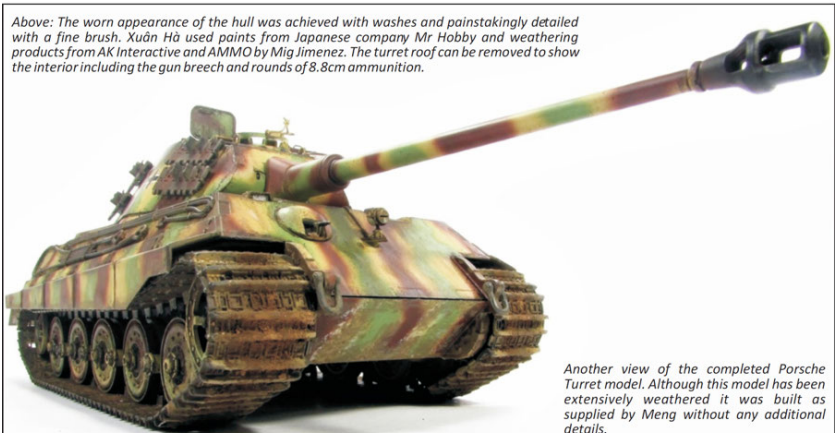




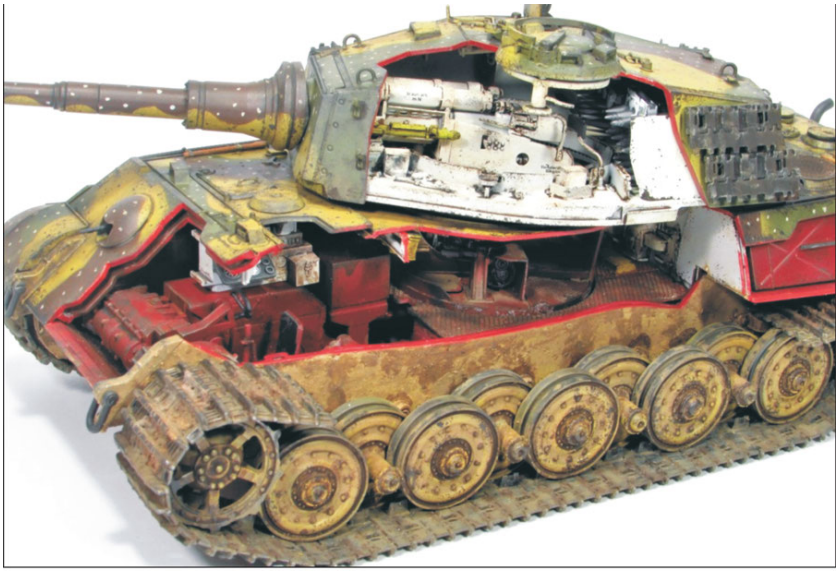
Vietnamese modeller Xuân Hà's replicas are both based on the Meng 1/35 scale kits mentioned in the Modelling Products section of this book. As most readers will know, the description of the turrets as Porsche and Henschel is not strictly correct but this is how these models are marketed by the manufacturer. The images on this page show the Porsche Turret model.



Above: The worn appearance of the hull was achieved with washes and painstakingly detailed with a fine brush. Xuân Hà used paints from Japanese company Mr Hobby and weathering products from AK Interactive and AMMO by Mig Jimenez. The turret roof can be removed to show the interior including the gun breech and rounds of 8.8cm ammunition.

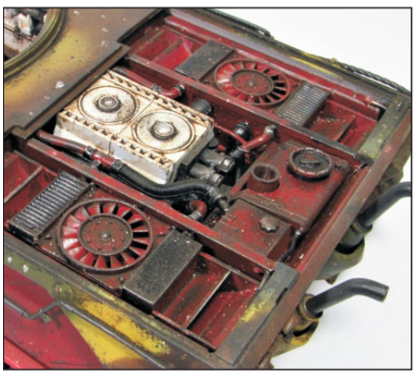


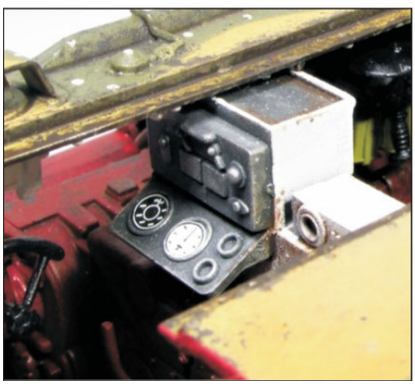
Another view of the completed Porsche Turret model. Although this model has been extensively weathered it was built as supplied by Meng without any additional details.



The kits are offered with full interior detailing, as shown here on the Henschel Turret version, and a cheaper version which does not include the interiors or cut-away turret and hull.

Below: Another view of the completed and painted Henschel Turret model with details of the interior. Xuân Hà works at Chân Dài Hobby in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, as a professional modeller and the kits shown here can be purchased. Chân Dài Hobby also offers a custom-building service and the store's contact details can be found on page 64.



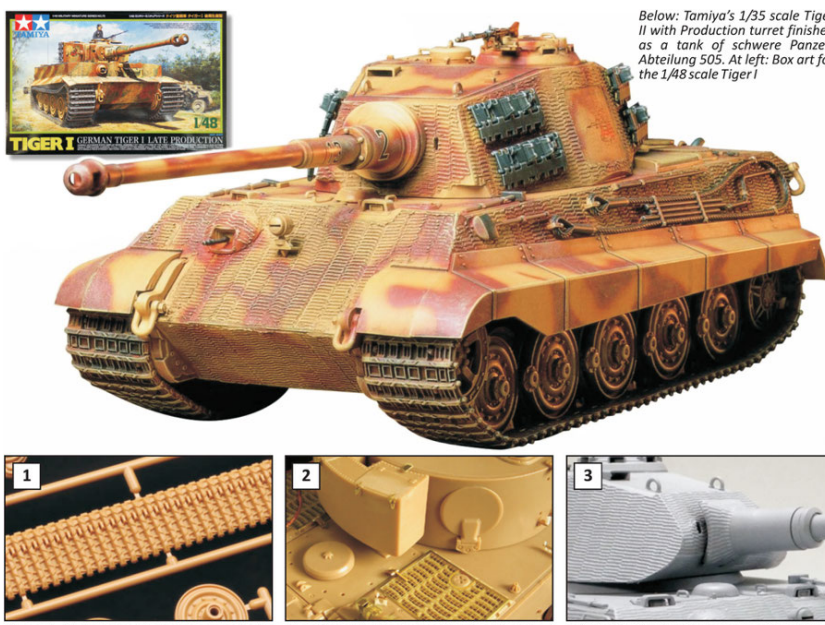


The Tiger I and Tiger II tanks are perhaps the most famous armoured fighting vehicles of the Second World War period and it should come as no surprise that over the years all major model manufacturers, and many smaller concerns, have offered kits for both. Although the early products would today be considered little more than toys, the more recent models are highly detailed representations, increasingly featuring photo-etched brass parts, turned aluminium barrels and workable tracks as standard, often depicting variants which were operational for just a short period of time or which may have only taken part in a single battle. The popularity of the models produced by the larger manufacturers has also led to the proliferation of specialised companies producing additional items such as resin and metal accessories and marking options. Models of the Tiger are produced in a number of scales from tiny 6mm wargames miniatures to the huge, radio-controlled 1/6 scale versions but these are at the extreme ends of the market and I have chosen to concentrate on the most popular modelling scales of 1/35, 1/48 and 1/72. I should mention that this list is far from exhaustive, mostly due to reasons of space, and to compensate I have omitted some companies that were mentioned in the other volumes in this series dealing with the Tiger I and Tiger II tanks. As always, I have limited any comment or critique of these kits or products to those of which I have firsthand knowledge. An index of manufacturers and their contact details can be found on page 64.

TAMIYA INCORPORATED

This Japanese company, which began life as a sawmill, has been manufacturing plastic kits since 1959, releasing their first armour model two years later. By the early 1970s Tamiya was producing a large range of armoured vehicles and accessories and the company was almost solely responsible for the rise in popularity of 1/35 scale. Like Airfix, the adoption of a constant scale proved popular at

a time when many manufacturers were making models to fit the box in which they would eventually be marketed. Tamiya's early kits were, for their day, highly detailed, relatively easy to assemble and, most importantly, affordable. From 2003 Tamiya began releasing a series of armour models in 1/48 scale, including early and late models of the Tiger I and a Tiger II, and this line has been extremely successful for the company. At the time of writing Tamiya produces, in 1/35 scale, an early, a midproduction and a late version of the Tiger I, a Tiger II fitted with the Production turret and coated with Zimmerit, a later Tiger II without the Zimmerit and a Tiger II with the earlier Porsche turret. Radio-controlled models of an early production Tiger I and a Tiger II are produced in both 1/35 and 1/16 scale.



Below: Tamiya's 1/35 scale Tiger II with Production turret finished as a tank of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 505. At left: Box art for the 1/48 scale Tiger I

Above: 1. The tracks and steel roadwheels from the 1/48 scale late production Tiger I model. 2. Detail of Tamiya's mid-production Tiger I kit in 1/35 scale showing some of the the photo-etched brass parts. 3. Tamiya also sells sheets of Zimmerit texture for the Tiger I and Tiger II shown here applied to the early production 1/35 scale King Tiger Porsche Turret kit.

DRAGON MODELS LIMITED

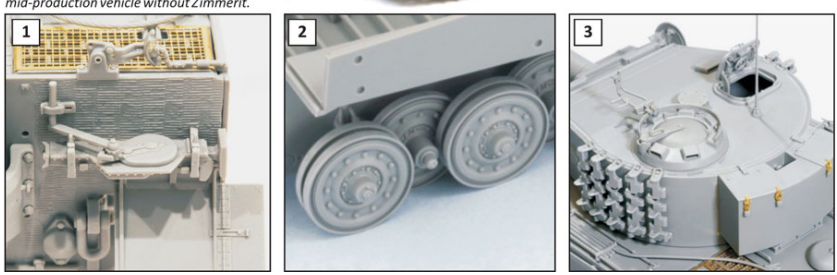
At the time of writing this Hong Kong-based company's catalogue contained over forty models of Tiger I and II variants in 1/35 and

1/72 scale including kits of the Bergetiger recovery vehicle. That number does not include the Jagdtiger tank destroyer and Sturmtiger assault gun, both offered in different scales. The larger scale models include early, mid and late production tanks as well as the Tiger I hybrid version. From time to time many of these models are repackaged with bonus items such as photo-etched parts or new sets of markings under the Cyberhobby label. Dragon also offers a number of the same tanks, pre-painted and assembled, in 1/144 scale and a complete range of 1/72 scale tanks, again pre-painted and assembled. To complement the vehicles there is a large range of highly detailed plastic multi-pose figures.

Tiger I hybrid version. From time to time many of figures.

Below: Dragon Models' late production Tiger II model in 1/35 scale. The kit comes complete with photo-etched brass and resin details and aluminium wire for the towing cable. This model represents a tank of late 1944 manufacture and is typical of the vehicles that took part in the battles of 1945. At left: Dragon's 1/35 scale early production Tiger II. This tank, as depicted in the box art, fought in Hungary in the spring of 1945.

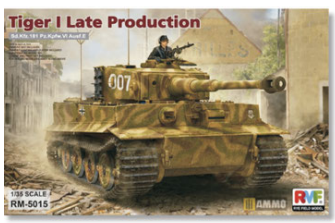
Below: 1. Detail of Dragon Models' mid-production Tiger I with Zimmerit coating. 2. The steel-tyred roadwheels of the late production Tiger I kit. 3. A 1943 production Tiger I. This model is essentially a mid-production vehicle without Zimmerit.

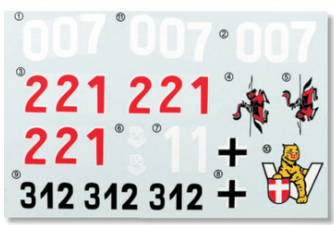


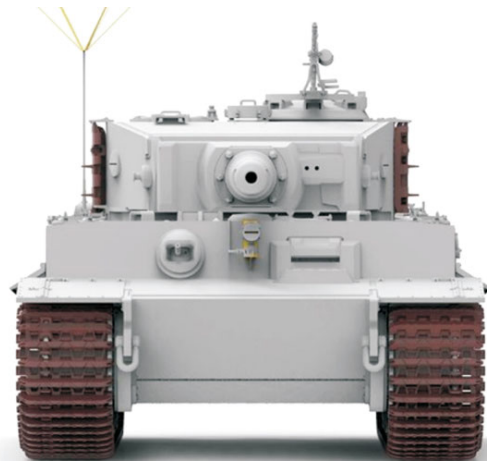
RYE FIELD MODELS

Based in Hong Kong, this company released three kits depicting Tiger I variants all in the short space of time between September 2015 and February 2016. An initial production model depicts a Tiger with the modifications seen on the first tanks sent to Tunisia and the mid-production version features extensive interior detailing. The third release, depicting a Hybrid Tiger I, utilises parts from the

kits. The late production Tiger I kit, announced in early 2018 and shown below, has at last been released and is specifically marketed as the Befehlstiger commanded by Michael Wittmann in Normandy but can of course be built to represent any vehicle that operated in late 1944 or early 1945. These are not re-worked or re-issued kits, as has been suggested, but completely new models.

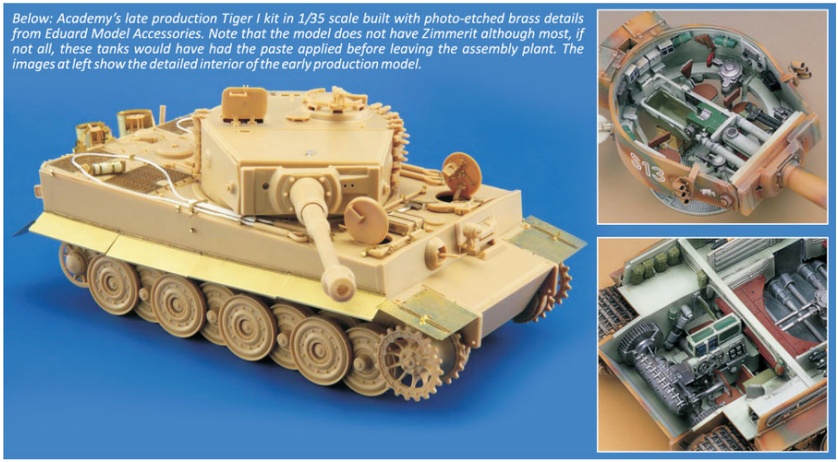






ACADEMY

Based in Korea, this company's Military Miniatures range of 1/35 scale figures and vehicles includes an early and mid-production Tiger I, a late production version and a Hybrid model with later steel wheels, optional Zimmerit texture for the hull and turret, early drum-style commander's cupola and a selection of markings marketed as Tiger I Hybrid Gruppe Fehrmann referring to the six Tigers from Panzerschule 1 Bergen which were commanded by Oberleutnant Rudolf Fehrmann during the last days of the war. Most of these models have been repackaged at some time, often with only minor changes or new markings, although some include additional parts.



Below: Academy's late production Tiger I kit in 1/35 scale built with photo-etched brass details from Eduard Model Accessories. Note that the model does not have Zimmerit although most, if not all, these tanks would have had the paste applied before leaving the assembly plant. The images at left show the detailed interior of the early production model.

TAKOM

This is one of the newest model manufacturers, setting up shop in Hong Kong in 2013 as Takom World and shortly afterwards expanding to open a plant in mainland China where the models are actually produced. Most kits are in 1 /35 scale and the company offers models of the Tiger II with the early and Production turrets and a complete set of individual track links. The Tiger models are both marketed in two versions, one with parts for extensive interior detailing as shown here. The latter also includes photo-etched brass parts including an incredibly detailed set of 88mm rounds with appropriate notations stamped into the base of each.

Takom's most recent release, at the time of writing, the initial production Tiger II with first model turret, armoured cover for the submersible gear, sheet metal exhaust covers and early pattern fenders. These tanks served with Panzer-Abteilung (Funklenk) 316 in Normandy.

MENG-MODEL

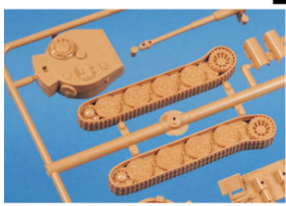
Founded in 2011, this Chinese company largely specialises in modern armour but has recently released two kits of the Tiger II in 1/35 scale to very favourable reviews. British modeller David Parker advised the company during the development of the model and the box art was created by the legendary Masami Onishi who is responsible for the dramatic paintings that accompany many of Tamiya's models. I should mention that a visit to the company's website can be an exercise in frustration with the products listed here under the names of various dinosaurs. Shown here is the Meng-Model Tiger II with the early Krupp turret. Both models can be built with full interior detail.

Below: Part of the extensive interior detailing that can be built in the 1/35 scale Tiger kits.

Meng-Model's Tiger II in 1/35 scale with the early turret and Zimmerit, built and painted as a tank of 3.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503.

ITALERI

This Italian company has been producing plastic models since its foundation in 1962 and the current catalogue contains Tiger I models depicting early, mid and late production versions and a recently-added late war Hybrid model in 1/35 scale. In 1/72 scale Italeri offers a Tiger II with the Production turret, originally manufactured by ESCI and which was first released in 1974, and a late Production Tiger I in their Fast Assembly range, a very basic kit comprising just ten pieces each. Of the large model manufacturers Italeri alone has ventured into 1/56 scale with a Tiger I late production kit and a model of the Tiger II which contains both the Porsche and Henschel turrets. This scale complements 28mm wargames figures of which there are now quite a number on the market.



At left: Italeri's 1/56 scale kits with the box art for the Tiger II and parts from the late production Tiger I kit.

Below: Italeri's mid-production Tiger I kit in 1/35 scale built with Hauler's photo-etched brass details.

HOBBYFAN/AFV CLUB

Hobby Fan Enterprises is the parent company of the better known AFV Club, both of which are based in Taiwan. The current AFV Club catalogue includes a Tiger I early production model and a late production version fitted with narrow transport tracks, both in 1/35 scale. The company also offers, in 1/48 scale, an early production vehicle and a Tiger I marketed both as a 'final' and 'latest' production model. The latter features some of the last modifications incorporated into production including the 40mm turret roof, later-style loader's hatch with a fully revised engine deck and tool placement. Most AFV Club kits include non-standard items such as turned metal gun barrels, photo-etched brass parts and a sheet of water-slide transfers offering numerous schemes. The company also provides solid plastic and workable tracks in individual links in both 1/35 and 1/48 scale in addition to ammunition, wooden crates and other general items. The 1/48 scale late production Tiger I model formally produced by Skybow is now marketed under the AFV Club logo.

Below: The AFV Club late production Tiger I in transport mode. This kit is essentially the same as the company's Tiger I Latest Model and Tiger I Late Model Michael Wittmann Special with some different parts. At right: The 1/48 scale Tiger I late production kit, formerly marketed by Sky Bow, and the workable plastic transport tracks.

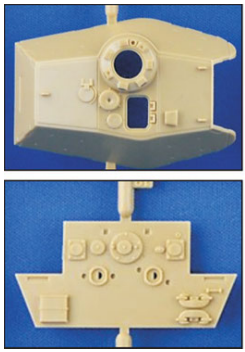
ZVEZDA

Founded in 1990, this Russian company has grown to become one of the country's larger exporters. In recent years Zvezda's catalogue has become heavily weighted towards modern Russian and Soviet-era vehicle and aircraft models but does include an early production model Tiger I in 1/35 scale which is a retooling of an older kit first released in 1996. The same version is also offered in 1 /72 and 1/100 scale. More recent releases include a Tiger II with the Porsche turret and Zimmerit and a later Tiger II with the Production turret without Zimmerit, both reworkings of Dragon kits with new, added parts. The long awaited 1/72 scale version of the Tiger II is among the company's latest releases.

Above: Zvezda's 1/35 scale Tiger with Production, or as listed here, Henschel turret. Rather confusingly the same, or very similar, box art is sometimes used for different scales. At right: The 1/35 scale early production Tiger I built with photo-etched parts from Eduard Model Accessories.

REVELL AND AIRFIX

No listing of model replicas of the Tiger tank would be complete without some mention of the venerable Airfix kit. First released in 1964, the packaging and box art has changed many times over the intervening years, as has the ownership of the company, although the model itself has remained unaltered. Wildly inaccurate, with ill-fitting parts and tracks that could only be described as rudimentary, it was, however, the starting point for many of today's great armour modellers and remains a sentimental favourite. The company's Tiger II in 1/76 scale is a reasonably good kit although it cannot be compared to the offerings from Dragon and Revell. The latter's 1/72 scale PzKpfw VI Ausf H Tiger kit was first released in 1997 and since that time it has been re-boxed several times and updated with extra parts, including the cast cupola and steel road wheels to produce the PzKpfw VI Tiger Ausf E version. Both these kits featured realistic link and length tracks and were the first accurate renditions of this important tank in the smaller scales. Readers should note that although the box art of the most recently-released models depict a vehicle coated with Zimmerit, as most of the mid and late production tanks were, this is not included with the kit.



Below: The Airfix 1/76 scale Tiger II built and painted for the company's catalogue. Note that most of the hull details, including the towing cables, are moulded on unlike the Revell kit, shown at left, or the Dragon Models' offering. Note also that most of these early production tanks would have been coated with Zimmerit.

HAULER

Based in the Czech Republic, this company produces accessory sets in photo-etched brass and resin in 1/48, 1/35 and even 1/87 scale, a size which complements HO scale railway models. A number of items in the company's extensive range are now produced under the Bren Gun logo.

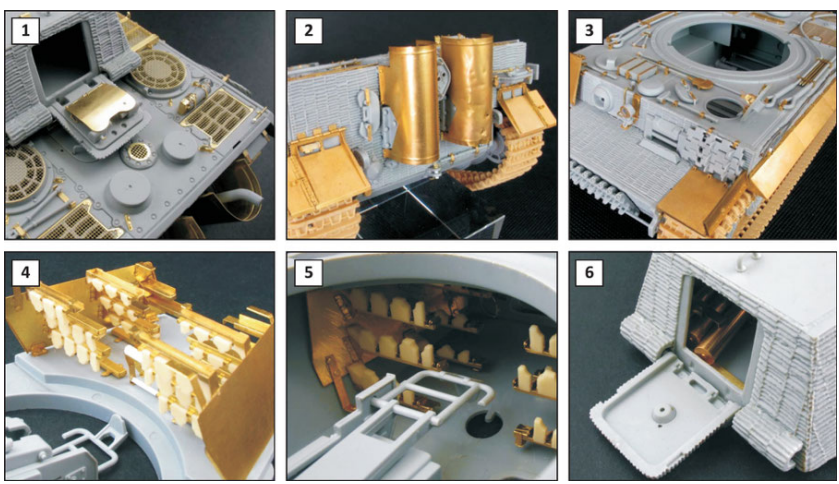
At right: Tamiya's 1/48 scale Tiger II built with Hauler's photo-etched brass detail set.

Below: The Italeri 1/35 scale Tiger I finished with photo-etched brass parts from Hauler.

GRIFFON MODEL

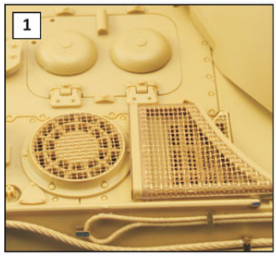
Based in China, this company produces a large range of photo-etched brass sets for the Tiger I and Tiger II in 1/35 scale to fit most

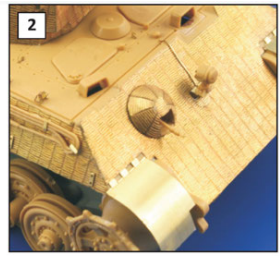
manufacturers'kits, although they do recommend Tamiya and Dragon Models. These sets are of a very high quality and extremely detailed and usually include a large number of separate pieces. Shown below are 1. Parts for an early production Tiger II including the interior of the turret rear access door, the engine grills and brackets for the fire extinguisher, here fitted to the Dragon Models kit. 2. Exhaust manifold covers and rear mudguards and various clamps and brackets for the mid or late production Tiger I. 3. A full photo-etched brass detail set for the mid or late production Tiger I. This set also contains aluminium track pins for the spare tracks and a metal wire towing cable. 4, 5 and 6. The internal ammunition racks and 8.8cm rounds for the Henschel turret viewed from below and through the turret rear access hatch.

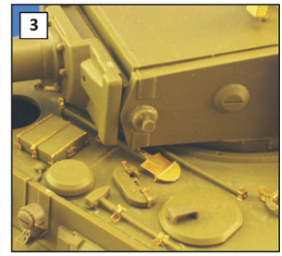


EDUARD MODEL ACCESSORIES

This Polish company has been manufacturing high-quality accessories in photo-etched brass and resin for many years and was one of the earliest firms to offer upgrade sets in the smaller scales. In addition to the upgrade sets, Eduard offers complete kits of the Tiger II which are actually the Academy 1/35 scale kit with Eduard's detail sets, paint masks and markings.

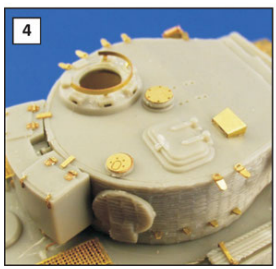


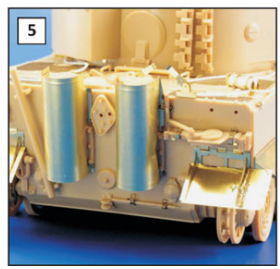


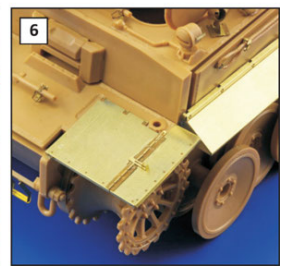


Above, 1. Details of the upgrade set for Tamyia's 1/35 scale Tiger II. 2. A section of the brass Zimmerit sheets applied to the Tamiya 1/48 scale Tiger II with Production turret. 3. Photo-etched brass details for the AFV Club 1/35 scale late production Tiger I. Below, 4. Parts from Eduard's upgrade set for the Dragon 1/72 scale Tiger I, shown here applied to the late production kit. 5. The Academy 1/35 scale late production Tiger I built with metal exhaust shrouds and rear fenders in 1/35 scale. 6. Parts from the detail set for the Zvezda 1/35 scale early production Tiger I.

The Dragon Models' 1/35 scale mid-production Tiger I built with Eduard's upgrade set in photo-etched brass. Not visible here are the details for the interior of the engine bay.







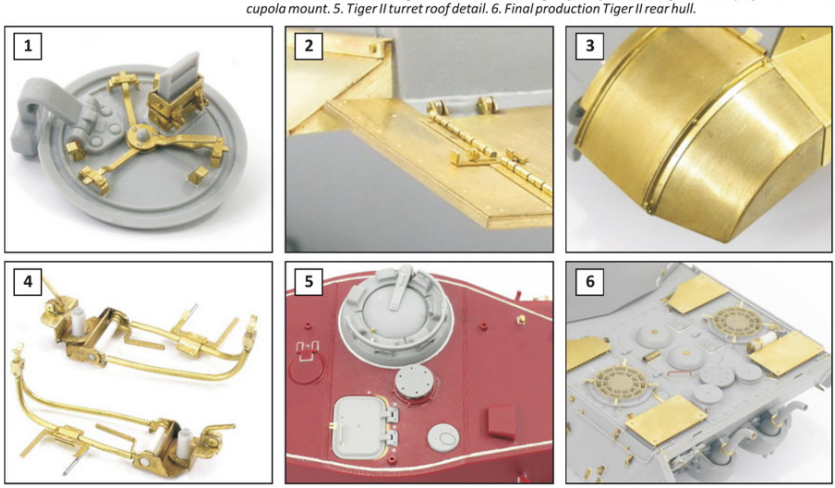
ROCHM MODEL

This company is owned and managed by master modeller Sheng Hui whose work has appeared in a number of books in the TankCraft series, including this volume. Initially specialising in 1/35 scale detail sets in resin, photo-etched brass and aluminium

for the Tiger I, the company moved onto the Tiger II series and produced extensive upgrades primarily intended for the Meng, Dragon and Zvezda models, although many of the parts would of course be suitable for most 1/35 scale kits. Rochm Model's products offer exceptional detail and considering the quality, are reasonably priced. Detail sets in 1/48 and 1/72 scale are currently in the planning stage.

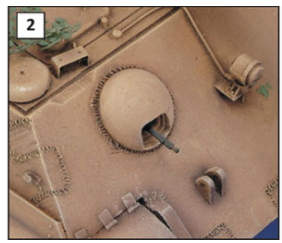
At right: Dragon Models' 1/35 scale Tiger II built and painted by Sheng Hui using his own photo-etched brass and resin upgrade sets.

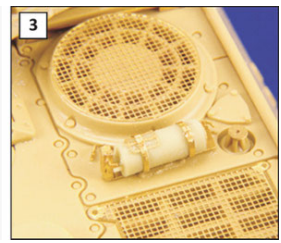
Below, all in 1/35 scale: 1. Tiger I hatch interior. 2. Tiger I front fender. 3. Tiger II late style fender. 4. MG cupola mount. 5. Tiger II turret roof detail. 6. Final production Tiger II rear hull.



ROYAL MODEL

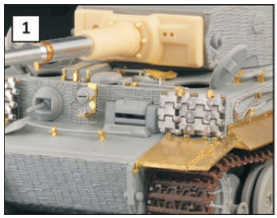
This Italian company has been producing high quality accessories and aftermarket parts since the early 1990s under the guidance of its founder, Roberto Reale. The catalogue includes complete upgrade sets in 1/35 scale for the early, mid and late production Tiger I and for the Tiger II. Royal Model also market a limited number of sets in 1/72 and 1/48 scale and crew figures for the larger scale models. Shown here are 1. The Tamiya Tiger I built with Royal Model photo-etched brass parts. 2. The Tiger II Kugelblende MG mount in resin. 3. Photo-etched brass parts for a 1/35 scale Tiger II.

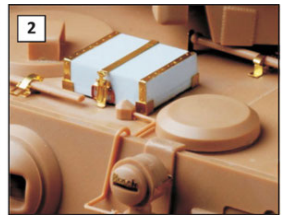


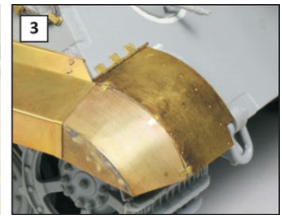


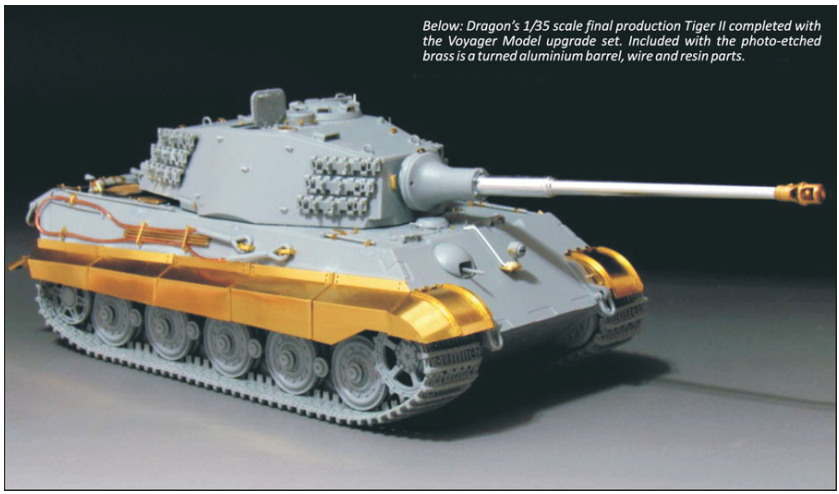
VOYAGER MODEL

Voyager have been manufacturing comprehensive upgrade sets for scale models since 2003 with the release of their first set for 1/35 scale armour. The company also produces turned aluminium barrels with muzzle brakes for both the late and early 8.8cm main guns of the Tiger in 1/35 scale and accessories in resin including Tiger I roadwheels in transport mode. Shown below are 1. A generic 1/35 scale detail set for the mid-production Tiger I. 2. Etched-brass details for the Trumpeter 1/35 scale early production Tiger I. 3. Metal Schürzen and fenders here applied to Dragon's 1/35 scale Tiger II.







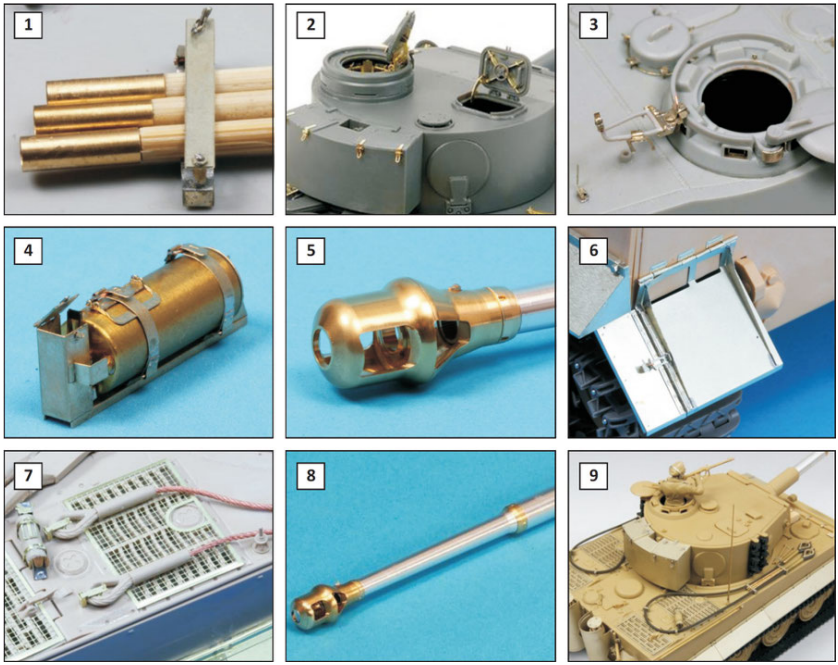


Below: Dragon's 1/35 scale final production Tiger II completed with the Voyager Model upgrade set. Included with the photo-etched brass is a turned aluminium barrel, wire and resin parts.

ABER

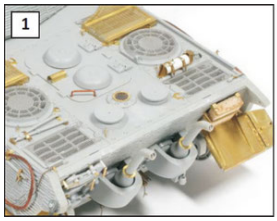
This Polish company has been manufacturing and selling upgrade sets since 1995, working in photo-etched brass, milled aluminium and brass, stainless steel and even wood. For some time now Tamiya has included Aber products with a number of their models. A full list of the accessories made specifically for the Tiger in all scales would be far too large to reproduce in this book and the reader can find the company's contact details on page 64. Shown here are, 1. Tiger II gun cleaning rods and their brackets in wood, brass and aluminium in 1/16 scale. 2. Photo-etched 1/35 scale details for the early production Tiger I. 3. Generic metal details for the Tiger II turret in 1/35 scale. 4, 5 and 6. 1/16 scale parts including a fire extinguisher, the early style muzzle brake as used on the Tiger I and Tiger II Porsche turrets and the Tiger I rear fender. 7. Details of the upgrade set for the Rye Field Models 1/35 scale early production Tiger I. 8. Barrel and muzzle brake in 1/35

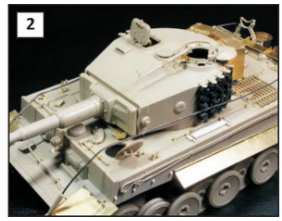
scale for the 8.8cm KwK 36 L/56 gun. 9. Details of the photo-etched brass set for the 1/35 scale late production Tiger I.

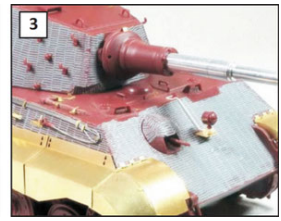


E.T. MODEL

This relatively new manufacturer from China, produces upgrade sets in 1/72 and 1/35 scale in brass and resin. Most sets are specifically designed, according to the company, to fit Dragon or Tamiya kits but some, for example the stowage bin, are referred to as universal. Shown below are the upgrade sets for, 1. Dragon Models' Tiger II. 2. Tamiya's 1/35 scale Tiger I mid-production kit. 3. Meng-Model's Tiger II, also in 1/36 scale. The optional Zimmerit coating is included with the kit.

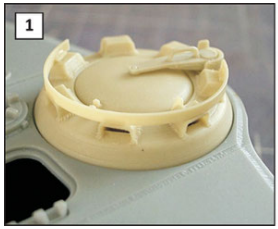


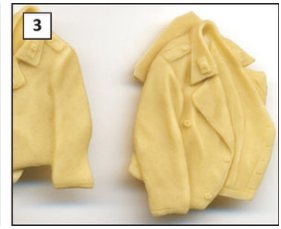




MODEL ARTISAN MORI

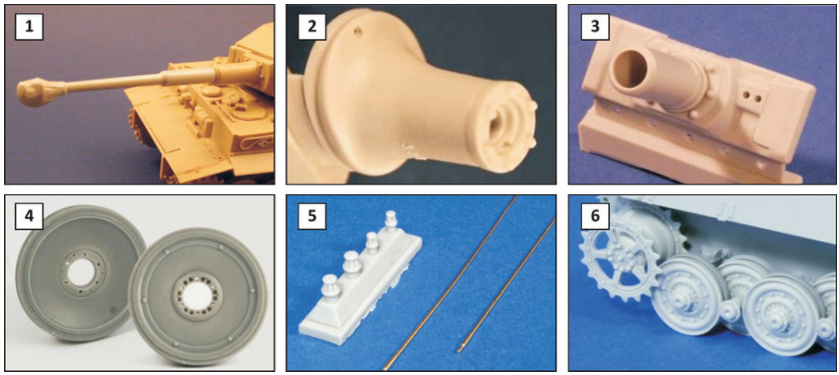
This small Japanese company produces resin upgrade parts for 1/35 scale armour models including detailed commander's cupolas for the Tiger I and Tiger II, for both the Porsche (1) and the Henschel (2) turrets, as well as more general items such as crew uniform (3) and tool sets, including fire extinguishers, tow shackles and bolt cutters, a 20-ton jack and Bosch headlights in kit form.





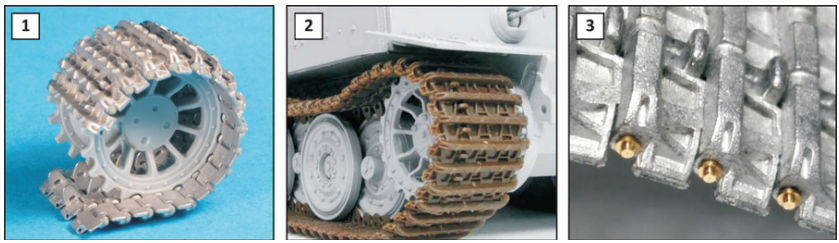
PANZER ART

Based in Poland this company produces a large range of resin parts for Second World War and modern era armoured vehicles in 1/35 scale. Shown here are, 1. A muzzle brake cover for the Tiger I. 2. Gun mantlet with casting marks for the Tiger II. 3. Strengthened gun mantlet for the Tiger I. 4. Spare roadwheels. 5. Radio insulators and aerials. 6. Later wheels for the Tiger II.



AFTERMARKET TRACKS

Most plastic kits today contain realistic tracks made from a form of vinyl which, unlike the older types, can be glued together, or hard plastic individual links. Nevertheless, there are many modellers who wish for the highest level of detail and realism possible and consequently the number of quality aftermarket products available seems to have increased in recent years, despite the extra expense and work required. Motorised models require workable tracks made up from individual links held together by pins, as were the full-size items. The examples shown here, all in 1 /35 scale, are 1. Later Tiger I tracks in white metal from Russian company Master Club. 2. Later Tiger I tracks in plastic from AFV Club. 3. Individual Tiger I track links in white metal and brass from R Model.



In September 1944 Hitler ordered the creation of new formations built around existing divisions which were to be referred to as Panzerkorps (neuer art), or new model. Each would control two divisions and contain a number of support units directly controlled by the corps headquarters, including a heavy tank battalion. Unlike the earlier corps establishments, which were flexible, the Panzerkorps (neuer art) was of fixed composition. During late 1944 and early 1945 attempts were made to build five Panzerkorps and it is entirely possible that the intention was to eventually reorganise all the army's Panzer and Panzergrenadier divisions in this way. One Panzerkorps (neuer art) was raised from ground combat units of the Luftwaffe. Those formations that were equipped with Tiger tanks are listed below.

Notes

1. Titled Neuaufstellung (or reorganisation) Pz. Korps Feldherrnhalle this order lists the support elements in detail but makes no mention of the Tiger battalion. The complete reference is OKH/GenStdH/Org.Abt./Op. Ill Nr. 2480/45 g.K.v. 25.2.45.

2. As a gunner and later tank commander Knipsel is credited with being involved in the confirmed destruction of over 160 enemy tanks. The unconfirmed total is much higher. The actual date of Knipsel's death is the subject of some debate and I have given the day recorded on his grave marker at the Central Cemetery of Honour in Brno.

Panzerkorps-Grossdeutschland (GD). Formed on 28 September 1944, this formation was not sent to the front until late December and even then was badly under strength and poorly trained.

The corps' heavy Panzer unit was supplied by III.Abteilung Panzer-Regiment GD which was renamed schwere Panzer-Abteilung GD on 13 December 1944. At that time the battalion had enough tanks to form a single company and after the initial operations in January 1945 around Praschnitz, modern-day Przasnysz in Poland, and the Krasnosielc Bridgehead on the Narew River, was reduced to just four operational vehicles. Although at least seven other Tigers were in repair the battalion was so depleted that by the end of January 1945 the Panzer regiment's remaining tanks, including the serviceable Tigers, had been combined into a weak Kampfgruppe under the command of Hauptmann Hans Bock.

On 1 February 1945 the battalion was officially dissolved and the majority of the crews were sent to Paderborn in Germany. The Kampfgruppe remained at the front and took part in the defensive battles in East Prussia between Gross Klinbeck and Amalienwalde, along the Königsberg to Elbing road, pushing the Russians back to the village of Maulen where, on 14 March 1945, one of the Tigers was destroyed. Another tank, one of the original 3. Kompanie vehicles, was lost near Pörschken three days later and on 19 March 1945 the last Tigers were destroyed by their crews.

Panzerkorps-Feldherrnhalle (FHH). The official date of this unit's formation is 27 November 1944 but its headquarters element and two constituent divisions were at that time surrounded in Budapest and subsequently destroyed.

On 21 December 1944 schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 was renamed

schwere Panzer-Abteilung FHH and this unit was to supply the corps' heavy tank battalion but also engaged in the fighting in Hungary and the attempts to relieve the Budapest garrison. Schwere Panzer-Abteilung FHH remained in Hungary supporting 23.Panzer-Division and later 4. Kavallerie-Division in the area between Magyalalmas and Stuhlweissenburg until 13 February 1945 when the battalion took part in the series of counterattacks on the Gran River bridgehead in support of 44.Reichsgrenadier-Division Hoch und Deutschmeister. By 25 February 1945 the Germans had successfully eliminated the Soviet forces in the Gran Bridgehead and on the same day an OKH order was issued to form Panzerkorps-Feldherrnhalle again. Although the battalion is not specifically mentioned in this order (1) by 7 March the Tigers were attached to Panzer-Division FHH 2, one of corps' two divisions. At that time the battalion could field just thirty-one tanks and these were grouped into two companies.

Throughout March the battalion took part in the battles for the Neutra Bridgehead and the withdrawal to the Carpathian Mountain passes. By early April 1945 the thirteen serviceable Tigers were operating as a Kampfgruppe which also contained a scratch company of Panzergrenadiers. In mid-April the battalion supported the defensive actions of 357.Infanterie-Division and 25.Panzer-Division but by the end of the month the Tigers were back with Panzerkorps-Feldherrnhalle which was by this time fighting in western Moravia near the Austrian border. During the month the battalion had lost fourteen Tigers and on 28 April 1945 Feldwebel Kurt Knipsel, possibly the most successful German tank commander of the war, was killed in the fighting near Wostitz, modern-day Vlasatice in the Czech Republic (2).

In early May the remaining tanks were engaged in a fighting withdrawal through Wittingau, present-day Trebon in the Czech Republic, towards the Austrian border in an effort to reach the West. The tanks were held up by an 8.8cm gun manned by Czech insurgents but managed to reach Budweis, today Ceske Budejovice, by 9 May 1945. On the following day, after a final award ceremony,

the last two Tigers were destroyed by their crews.

The survivors split into small groups and attempted to make their way home but over 400 were captured by units of the US Army. These men were held in a prisoner of war camp at Zwiesel in Bavaria for some time and then handed to the Soviets.

XXIV.Panzerkorps. Raised on 27 November 1944, this formation was to contain 16.Panzer-Division and 17.Panzer-Division while the support elements were built from existing units. The latter were all numbered 424 and on 21 December schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 was appropriately renamed and officially attached to XXIV.Panzerkorps (1). During the evening of 12 January 1945 the battalion's three companies were positioned along the front south of Kielce and the next morning began to advance towards the village of Lisow.

Notes

1. The change of title to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 424 was also necessary as the premier Waffen-SS Tiger battalion had been renumbered from 101 to 501 in September 1944.

2. Wallhausser was a company commander from the Panzerjäger battalion of Fallschirm-Panzergrenadier-Division 2 HG.

3. Similarly the last Panther tanks allocated to the Fallschirm-Panzer-Regiment HG were picked up by their crews from the MAN factory at Nürnberg.

Things went badly from the start with a Tiger of 3.Kompanie breaking through a bridge while several tanks of 2.Kompanie had to be abandoned after they were bogged down in the sandy soil. The Tiger of Leutnant Friedrich-Karl Oberbracht, a platoon commander of 1.Kompanie, lost both its tracks but fought on, destroying twenty enemy tanks before the end of the day. As the remaining tanks closed on Lisow the Soviets sprang their trap and a number of JS-2 tanks, backed up by towed anti-tank guns, opened a devastating fire and only a handful of Tigers escaped. The surviving tanks continued fighting in the Kielce area, withdrawing towards Czestochowa but all were eventually destroyed by their crews due to a total lack of fuel.

By 20 February 1945 the tank crews were at Grünberg, today Zielona Gora in western Poland, where they were used to form an ad-hoc Kampfgruppe built around a number of Panther and Pzkpfw IV tanks. The last of these vehicles, commanded by Oberfeldwebel Arnold from 2.Kompanie, was reported to be in action on 28 January near Zedlitz, today Grabice. On Monday, 5 February 1945 the survivors of the battalion were loaded onto trains at Sorau, modern-day Zary in Poland, and from there transferred to Paderborn. On the following Sunday the battalion was officially deactivated and the remaining personnel of the first and second companies were used to build schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 512. The crews of 3.Kompanie remained at Paderborn and later fought against the Allies, finally surrendering near Höxter, south of Hanover.

Fallschirm-Panzerkorps Hermann Göring (HG). Formed in October 1944, many accounts suggest that a heavy tank battalion was never raised from this formation although the Panzerlage Ost report of 15 March 1945 states that a single inoperable Tiger I was on hand at that time. By 15 April three serviceable Tigers were available and two days later these were engaged in an assault on the village of Neu Krauscha,

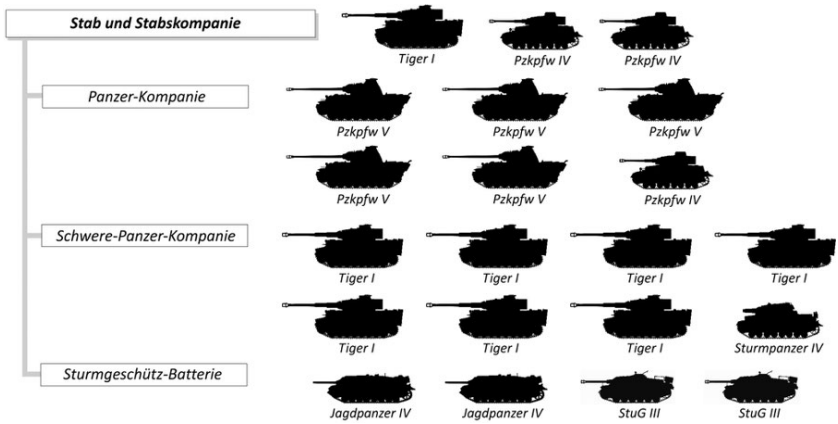
east of Bautzen on the present-day Polish border, where one was destroyed.

On 19 April 1945 the serviceable tanks of Fallschirm-Panzer-Regiment HG with the remaining two Tigers were formed into a Kampfgruppe led by Oberleutnant Karl-Heinz Wallhausser (2) and took part in an attack between Ebersbach and Kodersdorf where they managed to stop the advance of the 2nd Polish Army.

On the following day the battalion reported that twelve Tigers were on hand. I can offer no explanation as to where the ten new tanks may have come from but given the small numbers involved it seems likely that these were damaged vehicles handed over from repair depots (3).

PANZER-KAMPFGRUPPE GROSSDEUTSCHLAND, MARCH 1945

On 1 February 1945, schwere Panzer-Abteilung Grossdeutschland (GD) was officially dissolved and the eleven Tiger I tanks that had so far survived the fighting in East Prussia were absorbed into a Kampfgruppe built around the remnants of Panzer-Regiment GD. The majority of the Tiger crews were transferred to Paderborn in Germany for retraining on the Tiger II. During February a further three Tigers were destroyed and by the beginning of March the Kampfgruppe was reduced to the vehicles shown here and was serving under the command of Fallschirm-Panzer-Division 1 Hermann Goring. The single Sturmpanzer IV is one of the survivors of Sturmpanzer-Kompanie 218 zbV which was attached to Panzer-Regiment GD from the end of 1944.


Stab und Stabskompanie
Tiger I
Pzkpfw IV
Pzkpfw IV
Panzer-Kompanie
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw IV
Schwere-Panzer-Kompanie
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
Tiger I
Sturmpanzer IV
Sturmgeschütz-Batterie
Jagdpanzer IV
Jagdpanzer IV
StuG III
StuG III

In 1945 a number of hastily-raised formations were equipped with small numbers of Tiger tanks. These were in the main vehicles that had been undergoing repairs or taken from training establishments and of the formations mentioned here only Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf, which was later absorbed by Panzer-Division Müncheberg, was allocated any vehicles through the Heereszeugamt, the army's supply directorate. Records from this period are often incomplete, sometimes contradictory or non-existent and in part our knowledge is based on personal accounts and photographic evidence. Where this is the case I have tried to make it clear.

Notes

1. For administrative and recruitment purposes Germany was divided into a number of Wehrkreise or military districts.

2. The term Panzer-Stossreserve can be roughly translated as armoured strike reserve.

Panzer-Regiment Kurmark. Originally formed on 26 January 1945 as a Kampfgruppe made up from elements of Panzergrenadier-Ersatz-Brigade Grossdeutschland (GD) at Cottbus and personnel from Schiessplatz Wünsdorf, the unit was commanded by Oberst Willy Langkeit. Although a number of the officers and NCOs were veterans, the majority of the men were young recruits and some had even been press-

ganged while passing through Cottbus by train on their way to other units.

In an effort to obtain armoured vehicles Oberst Langkeit commandeered tanks from local factories and training establishments and two Tiger I tanks, described as worn out, were handed over from Panzer-Ersatz-und Ausbildungs-Abteilung GD. The armoured component was commanded by Major Helmut Hudel. Within 48 hours of its formation Kampfgruppe Langkeit was thrown into action east of Frankfurt an der Oder against the advancing Soviets.

Oberst Langkeit was ordered to attack the flank of the Soviet forces advancing towards Stettin in the north but the Germans were themselves surprised and by 30 January 1945 the attack had been called off. On the same day elements of Kampfgruppe Langkeit were tasked with relieving II.SS-Panzerkorps which were encircled near Sternberg.

By Saturday, 3 February 1945 Langkeit's infantrymen, with the assistance of the assault gun company of Panzerjäger-Abteilung 151, had managed to break through the Soviet ring. On the same day it was ordered that Kampfgruppe Langkeit be used to build Panzergrenadier-Division Kurmark and the original armoured component would form the second battalion of the division's Panzer regiment while Panzerjäger-Abteilung 151 would be used to build the first.

By the middle of February 1945 just one Tiger was on hand and with only two squads of infantry this tank was holding a 6-kilometre front on the west bank of the Oder River north of Frankfurt.

On 30 March the division was moved into reserve near Falkenhagen, 15 kilometres north-west of Frankfurt, and just over a week later it was reported that no operational Tigers were on hand.

Panzer-Kompanie Panther. Raised on 30 January 1945 from units of Wehrkreis III, with headquarters at Berlin, and intended for service in Silesia, the company's first platoon contained three Tiger I tanks (1).

The company was created as part of Operation Gneisenau which saw units and departments of the Ersatzheer, or reserve army, transferred to the field army. As the official Heereszeugamt allocation lists for Tiger and Panther tanks contain no mention of this unit the tanks may have been drafted from Panzer-Ersatz-und Ausbildungs-Abteilung GD which was under the control of Kommandeur der Ersatztruppen Wehrkreis III. Nothing more is known about this unit.

Panzer-Stossreserve Posen. On 20 January 1945, with the Soviet armies rapidly advancing towards the west, Hitler declared the city of Posen, now Poznan in Poland, a fortress that was to be defended to the last. Hauptmann Wolfgang von Malotki, an infantry officer, was tasked with forming an armoured unit to assist in the defence of the city and this eventually included a Tiger I, two Panthers, a single Pzkpfw IV tank and an assortment of other armoured vehicles. This company-sized formation was referred to as Panzer-Stossreserve Posen (2).

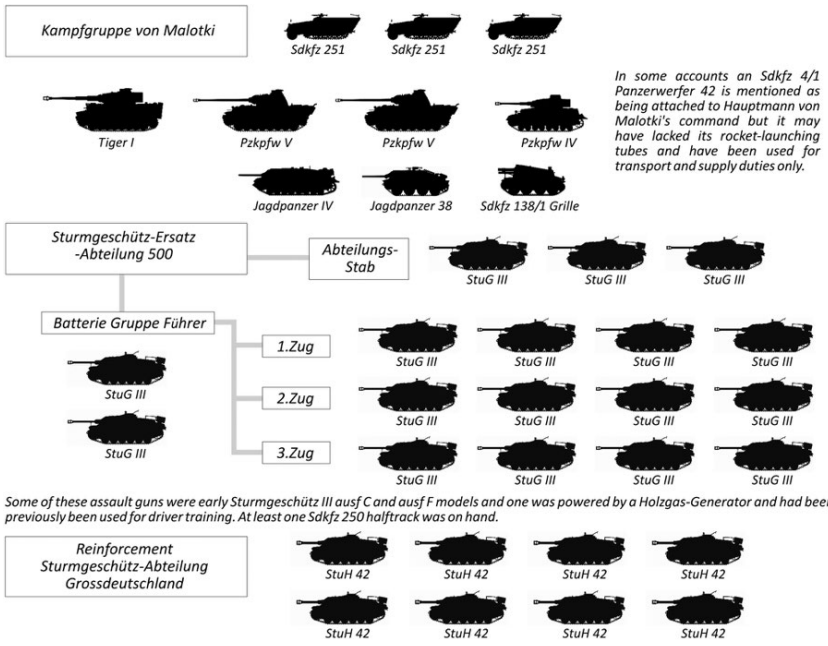
The origin of the tanks is uncertain and most lacked crews, with Hauptmann von Malotki forced to personally conduct a recruiting

drive among the infantry units stationed in the city. Obergefreiter Richard Siegert, who served as the driver and later commander of the Tiger, suggests in his account of the battle that his tank was delivered to Posen from the workshops at Wreschen, modern-day Wrzesnia, about 25 kilometres to the east. Siegert himself had served in Heeres-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 664, a unit equipped with towed 8.8cm guns. The only known photograph of this tank suggests that it was assembled at some time after August 1943, when the single headlight was introduced, and before February 1944 when the tanks were fitted with steel-tyred roadwheels. A scale model, partly based on this photograph, was presented to Herr Siegert in recent years and he agreed that it was an accurate representation of his Tiger I. However, the model featured the early cupola which was dropped from production in July 1943 and if this is correct the tank may have been built at the Wreschen workshops from a midproduction hull fitted with an early production turret.

PANZER-STOSSRESERVE POSEN, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1945

This unit was scraped together over the course of a few days and the basic organisation is shown below. Just before the battle for Posen commenced, perhaps as late as the evening of 22 January 1945, the available vehicles were split into two Kampfgruppen. The first, under the direct command of Hauptmann von Malotki, included the Tiger, one Panther and ten Sturmgeschütz assault guns and initially took up positions around Fort Rauch on the eastern bank of the Warthe River. The remaining vehicles were assembled near the citadel, just north of the city centre. The self-propelled artillery piece may not have been a 15cm Sdkfz 138/1, as shown here, but there was definitely one of these vehicles in Posen. The assault gun unit was actually one of several created from Sturmgeschütz-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 500, a training and replacement unit based at Warthelager in Wehrkreis XXI. Initially formed from the battalion as Alarmheit5/XXI on 19 January 1945, it is usually referred to by the title shown here. I have assumed an organisation in accordance with KstN 416b Stab und Stabsbatterie einer Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung of1.2.1944 and KstN 446b Sturmgeschütz-Batterie zu 14 Geschütze also dated 1.2.1944. Although this is

speculative on my part, and may be meaningless in the circumstances, it would at least account for the total of seventeen assault guns. The eight Sturmhaubitze 42 guns were under the command of Oberwachtmeister Anton Reif, an experienced soldier who had served with Panzergrenadier-Division Grossdeutschland since 1942.



At left: The only known photograph of the Tiger I tank attached to Panzer-Stossreserve Posen taken at some time after the garrison had surrendered. The single headlight on the hull front and the early style roadwheels suggest that this vehicle was assembled at some time after August 1943 and before February 1944. A scale model, partly based on this photograph and built by Mr Bartosz Ciesielski, was presented to Richard Siegert, who commanded this tank, in 2015 and he agreed that it was an accurate representation of his Tiger I. The 1/35 scale model was finished in a camouflage scheme of very roughly applied whitewash and this is also seen in photographs of the Panther tanks of Hauptmann von Malotki's Kampfgruppe, some of which are very clear. The model featured the early cupola which was dropped from production in July 1943 and it has been suggested that this tank was built at the Wreschen workshops from a mid-production hull fitted with an early production turret. This would also explain the absence of Zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste. In his account of the battle Herr Siegert mentions that the 'turret hatch' was damaged by a hit from a captured Panzerfaust on 29 January 1945 and that may explain why the details of the turret roof are obscured here. This tank is also discussed on page 19 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

In addition to the tanks, Panzer-Stossreserve Posen was later

reinforced with seventeen assault guns from Sturmgeschütz-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 500 and a further eight Sturmhaubitze 42 assault howitzers, complete with their crews, which were in transit to Panzergrenadier-Division GD. From 23 January 1945 the lone Tiger, initially commanded by Oberfeldwebel Fritz Sander, took part in the fighting in the inner city claiming the destruction of at least seven Russian T-34 tanks and a number of anti-tank guns.

During the evening of 29 January 1945 the commander's cupola was hit by a captured Panzerfaust but the Tiger remained mobile until 16 February when the gearbox was irreparably damaged during an artillery barrage near the citadel, today one of the northern suburbs of the of the city. It was towed almost 1 kilometre further north to the edge of the Zeppelin field, near what is today the Wladyslawa Czarneckiego Park, by an assault gun and fought on as a pillbox, destroying two JS-2 tanks. On the following day another two enemy tanks were knocked out but by 23 February 1945 the garrison of Posen had surrendered.

Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf. On Tuesday, 13 February 1945 an order was issued to create an ad-hoc unit of company size from vehicles and personnel of the Technischen Versuchs-Kompanie stationed at Versuchstelle Kummersdorf, a massive weapons-testing facility south of Berlin. The company was fully formed by the following Friday and consisted of three tank platoons, a reconnaissance platoon and an infantry platoon. There is some debate as to the composition of the tank platoons but a report of 30 March 1945 prepared for the Inspekteur der Panzertruppen states that one Tiger II, one Jagdtiger, four Panthers, two Pzkpfw IV and a single Pzkpfw III tank were on hand. In addition the company fielded two captured M4 Sherman tanks, a Nashorn self-propelled 8.8cm gun and a Hummel ammunition carrier fitted with an MG 151 Drilling mount. These are described as Bedingt Beweglich, or as having limited mobility. The report also mentions a 'Porsche Tiger 8.8cm L/70' (1), one Steyr Waffenträger 8.8cm Pak 43 and an Italian P40 tank as also being with the company. These

last three are noted as Unbeweglich, or immobile.

An OKH memo dated 19 April 1945 mentions that parts of Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf, now near Luckau about 60 kilometres south of Berlin, was to join schwere Pak-Kompanie Dresden to form Kampfgruppe Moltke (2).

The memo states that the Panzer unit was made up of twelve tanks of various types (verschiedener muster) and specifically mentions that this was only part of the company. The Kampfgruppe was almost immediately incorporated into a larger ad-hoc formation under the command of Oberst Ernst Käther and in late April this battle group was in action south of Zossen, near the Wehrmacht's main command and communications facilities at Wünsdorf. This unit should not be confused with Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf 2 (bo) which was raised on 2 April 1945 and fought against the advancing US Army around Schweinfurt (1).

Notes

1. This inclusion is something of a mystery as the report to the Inspekteur der Panzertruppen of 30 March 1945 lists this vehicle as Tiger Porsche 8.8 L/70 and many accounts assume this to be a VK4501 (P), the Porsche company's unsuccessful design for the Tiger I. But that vehicle was fitted with the 8.8cm L/56 gun and the Tiger II was armed with the L/71 version. It is possible, although far from certain, that this vehicle may be one of three hulls completed for the VK4502, Porsche's version of the Tiger II.

2. One account suggests the company was attached to Kampfgruppe Mows together with parts of Panzer-Regiment 11 and Panzerjäger-

Abteilung 614 but an entry in the Kriegstagebuch of the Inspekteur der Panzertruppen dated 21 April 1945 contradicts that.

Purchased by the Swedish government in 1947, this Tiger II is one of only fifty tanks produced with the so-called Porsche turret. Long thought to have served with one of the units that fought in Normandy, this vehicle has now been positively identified as Fahrgestelle nummer 280006 and was one of the tanks used as an experimental platform by the Kummersdorf testing facility. Late in the war it was transferred to St Johan in Austria and fitted with the later model tracks and an experimental exhaust system. After May 1945 it was transported to France and from there to Sweden.

Notes

1. The suffix (bo) stands for Bodenständig, or static, a unit with very limited mobility.

Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf. Raised on 15 February 1945 as Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf (bo), the battalion was commanded by Hauptmann Horst Zobel and initially formed around a cadre of personnel from Panzer-Abteilung Stahnsdorf 1.

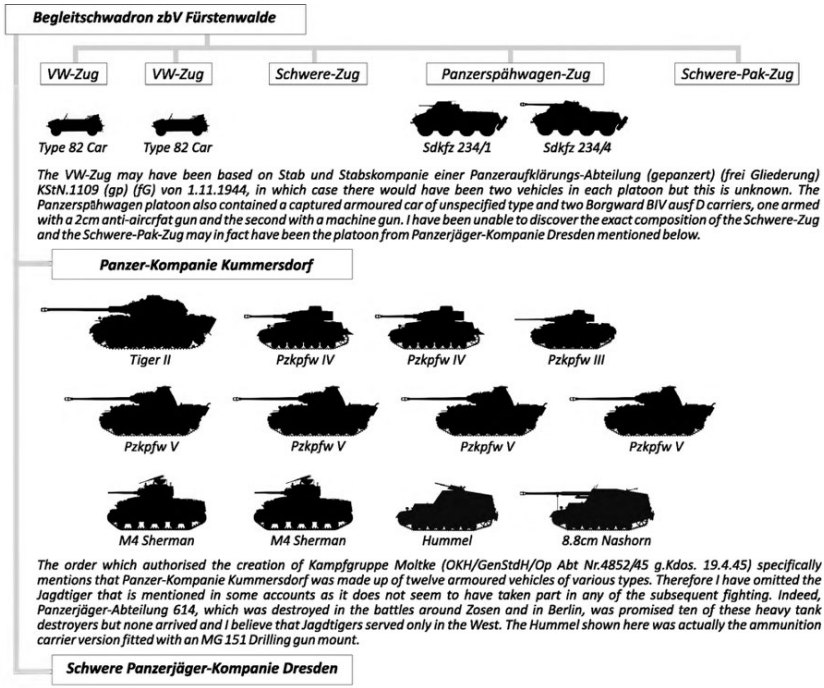
On the following day a Panzer company built from elements of Panzerlehr-und-Versuchsgruppe Kummersdorf was incorporated and on 17 February 1945 the battalion was renamed Panzer-Abteilung

Kummersdorf. It was to contain a total of thirty-one tanks and the three companies were to be organised using KstN 1177 of 1 November 1943. On 23 February 1945 the battalion was allocated the last five Tiger I tanks issued by the Heereszeugamt. During the second week of March the battalion was ordered to join Panzer-Division Müncheberg.

Panzer-Regiment Müncheberg. On 5 March 1945 orders were issued by OKH for the formation of Panzer-Division Müncheberg. Initially the division was to contain a Panzer battalion and it seems that Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf was at first considered for this role but on Monday, 12 March 1945 the battalion was ordered to hand over all its vehicles to I.Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 29 which had arrived in the division's assembly area on the previous Thursday. This unit had been operating as an independent formation under the control of LVII.Panzerkorps in Silesia and was made up of a staff element with transport and maintenance platoons but contained just two Panzer companies.

KAMPFGRUPPE MOLTKE, APRIL 1945

In attempt to eliminate the Soviet breakthrough at Calau, 20 kilometres west of Cottbus in the Oberspreewald, Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH) ordered the creation of an ad-hoc Kampfgruppe with instructions that the Russian spearhead be cut off by a swift armoured thrust. The hastily-formed Kampfgruppe Moltke contained a number of armoured cars and powerful anti-tank guns but its real striking power lay in the tanks of Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf which had been raised from the assets of the army's weapons-testing facility south of Berlin. On Saturday, 21 April 1945 elements of Kampfgruppe Moltke occupied the road junction at Luckau, north-west of the Soviet forward positions, but could little against the 400 Red Army tanks that were hurled against them and were pushed back towards Zossen.


Begleitschwadron zbV Fürstenwalde
VW-Zug
VW-Zug
Schwere-Zug
Panzerspähwagen-Zug
Schwere-Pak-Zug
Type 82 Car
Type 82 Car
Sdkfz 234/1
Sdkfz 234/4
The VW-Zug may have been based on Stab und Stabskompanie einer Panzeraufklärungs-Abteilung (gepanzert) (frei Gliederung) KStN.1109 (gp) (fG) von 1.11.1944, in which case there would have been two vehicles in each platoon but this is unknown. The Panzerspähwagen platoon also contained a captured armoured car of unspecified type and two Borgward BIV ausf D carriers, one armed with a 2cm anti-aircrfat gun and the second with a machine gun. I have been unable to discover the exact composition of the Schwere-Zug and the Schwere-Pak-Zug may in fact have been the platoon from Panzerjäger-Kompanie Dresden mentioned below.
Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf
Tiger II
Pzkpfw IV
Pzkpfw IV
Pzkpfw III
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
Pzkpfw V
M4 Sherman
M4 Sherman
Hummel
8.8cm Nashorn
The order which authorised the creation of Kampfgruppe Moltke (OKH/GenStdH/Op Abt Nr.4852/45 g.Kdos. 19.4.45) specifically mentions that Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf was made up of twelve armoured vehicles of various types. Therefore I have omitted the Jagdtiger that is mentioned in some accounts as it does not seem to have taken part in any of the subsequent fighting. Indeed, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 614, which was destroyed in the battles around Zosen and in Berlin, was promised ten of these heavy tank destroyers but none arrived and I believe that Jagdtigers served only in the West. The Hummel shown here was actually the ammunition carrier version fitted with an MG 151 Drilling gun mount.
Schwere Panzerjäger-Kompanie Dresden

This unit was raised with three platoons but just one was attached to Kampfgruppe Moltke. All were equipped with six towed heavy anti-tank guns, possibly the 8.8 cm PaK 43/3 on the Behelfs-Lafetten-Kreuz mount, several of which were photographed in and around Berlin. The other two platoons were attached to Kampfgruppe Mows which was eventually absorbed into Kampfgruppe Käther.

The tank crews of Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf were ordered to Hoppegarten, east of Berlin, to be reorganised. The Tigers were incorporated into I.Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 29 as the third company and the remaining tanks and vehicles from Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf were formed into a fourth Gemischte, or mixed, company.

A Grundgliederung, or official organisation chart, issued for this division on 6 March 1945 has survived the war and I.Abteilung,

Panzer-Regiment 29 is clearly marked as tactically subordinated to Panzer-Division Müncheberg, meaning that this was viewed as a temporary relationship. In addition, the entry for 4.Kompanie has been changed by hand from ten Jagdpanzer to 'Gem', for Gemischte or mixed, and the Pzkpfw IV tanks which were supposed to have been allocated have been deleted entirely, presumably by the same hand.

The Panzer regiment went into action for the first time on 22 March 1945 as part of a major assault that attempted to open a corridor to Küstrin on the Oder River (1).

The Tiger company was initially held in reserve but did manage to destroy a number of enemy tanks late in the day near Golzow, a small village on the Küstrin to Seelowe road. Another attack was launched on 27 March 1945 but was broken up by an artillery barrage that was so intense that parts of the neighbouring 20. Panzergrenadier-Division, already badly depleted by the fighting around Kielce and along the Vistula, simply fled towards the rear. Following this action just two of the Tigers were considered operational while five were in short-term repair and two had been sent for long-term maintenance.

A number of accounts state that on the same day one Tiger was shipped to the division by the Heereszeugamt but there is no record of any allocation in the official lists. A report of 6 April 1945 states that seven Tigers were combat ready while two were in short-term repair with the total number available given as thirteen. There are no surviving records to suggest where these additional tanks came from but Schneider also agrees with this tally. Frustratingly, an OKH status report on the strength of 9. Armee dated the following day gives details for Panzer-Division Müncheberg but does not mention any Tigers (2).

On 10 April 1945 the crews of Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf were ordered to move from Hoppegarten and rejoin the division and two days later orders were issued for the creation of a full Panzer regiment for Panzer-Division Müncheberg. The battalion was renamed Panzer-Abteilung Müncheberg and was sometimes referred to as I.Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment Müncheberg. The regimental headquarters was built around Panzerstab zbV. Coburg, under Oberstleutnant Kuno von Meyer, and I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 29 became, rather confusingly, the regiment's II. Abteilung.

Fighting almost continuously, the division reported that in the three days up to 17 April 1945 a total of five Tigers had been so badly damaged that they were written off. Forced back by the Soviet advance from the Seelowe Heights, the remnants of the division withdrew, ironically, through the town of Müncheberg, which now lay in ruins, and by 24 April 1945 had taken up positions in the north-east of Berlin with parts of 9.Fallschirmjäger-Division and 11.SS-Panzergrenadier-Division.

During the first week of May five Tiger I tanks were operating near the Berlin Zoo and the last serviceable tank was abandoned a few hundred metres from the Brandenburg Gate. This tank, with company number 323, was in remarkably good condition and was put on display in Berlin for some time after the war. It is depicted on page 21 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

Although outside the remit of this study, I should say that in several different accounts the units raised from elements of Versuchstelle Kummersdorf mentioned here are all credited with having a Jagdtiger on hand at some point. It is highly unlikely that they are all correct as a report dated 13 February 1945 listing the available armoured vehicle assets at Kummersdorf states that just one Jagdtiger was at the facility. As the best documentary evidence we have suggests that this single Jagdtiger was allocated to Panzer-Kompanie Kummersdorf, the unit that later became part of

Kampfgruppe Moltke/Möws, I have not included it in the accompanying chart for Panzer-Abteilung Müncheberg. Many of the tanks that could be salvaged or towed after the battles in and around Berlin were put on show after the cessation of hostilities and it is difficult to imagine that the Russians would not have displayed such a prize if one of these huge tank destroyers had taken any part in the fighting.

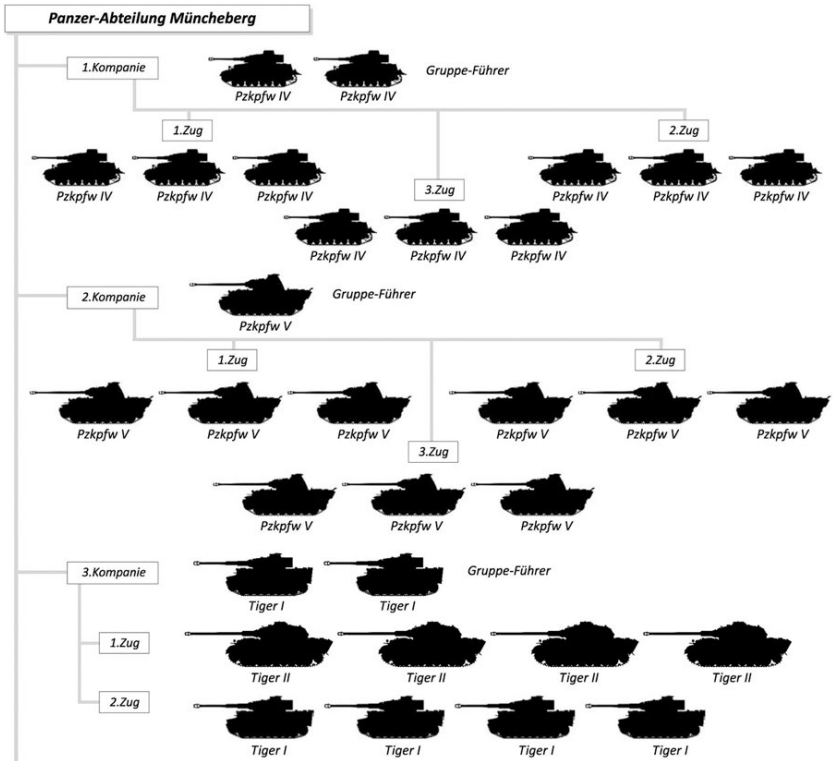
Notes

1. Elements of both Panzergrenadier regiments had been at the front since 20 March 1945.

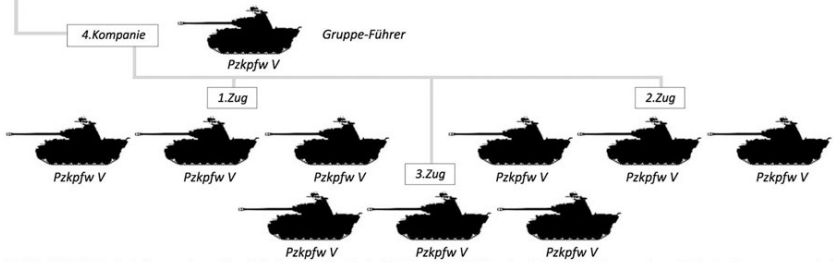
2. Gen.St.d.H./Op.Abt. Ill/Nr 35 579/45 gKdos dated 7 April 1945.

PANZER-ABTEILUNG MÜNCHEBERG, MARCH-APRIL 1945

Raised by an order of 5 March 1945, the battalion was to be formed from elements of Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf and I.Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 29. The headquarters element was to be furnished by Stab, Panzer-Regiment zbV Coburg. Panzer-Abteilung Kummersdorf did not join the battalion until 14 March, reporting on the same day that six Tiger I and four Tiger II tanks and a single Jagdtiger tank destroyer were on hand. By the following day this total had fallen to eight serviceable vehicles of all types.

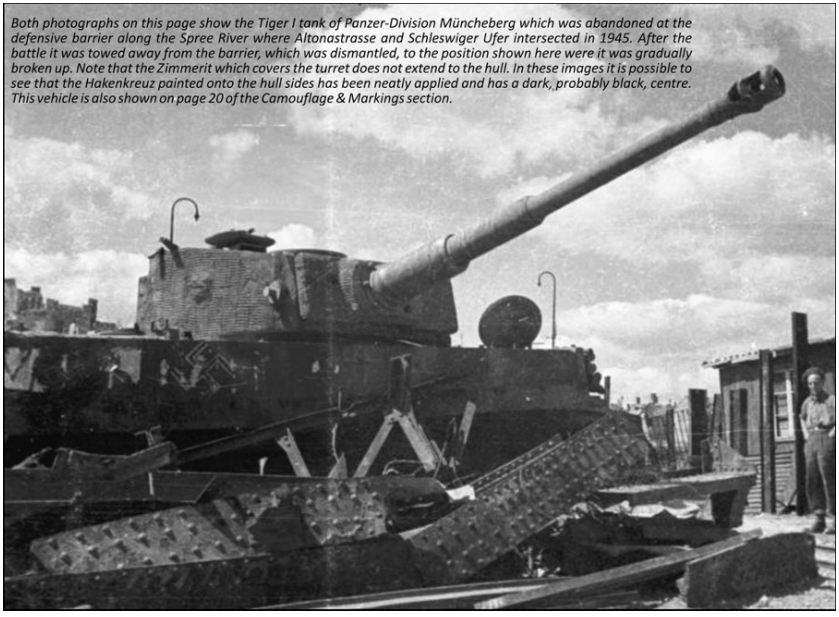


The allocation of vehicles to specific platoons is somewhat conjectural on my part and is based on the Kriegsstärkenachweisungen (KstN) mentioned in the orders issued regarding the formation of Panzer-Division Müncheberg. This is explained in detail in the main text. The turret number of at least one Tiger I of the battalion, photographed in Berlin, confirms that some of these vehicles, probably most, were concentrated in the second platoon of 3.Kompanie.



On 5 April 1945 the battalion was issued ten Pzkpfw V Panther tanks fitted with Fg1250 Sperber infrared sighting equipment. The tanks were supported by a Panzergrenadier company with three SdKfz 251/20 Uhu infrared searchlights and a number of Sdkfz 251/1 halftracks fitted with Falke infrared imaging equipment for driver and MG 42.

Both photographs on this page show the Tiger I tank of Panzer-Division Müncheberg which was abandoned at the defensive barrier along the Spree River where Altonastrasse and Schleswiger Ufer intersected in 1945. After the battle it was towed away from the barrier, which was dismantled, to the position shown here were it was gradually broken up. Note that the Zimmerit which covers the turret does not extend to the hull. In these images it is possible to see that the Hakenkreuz painted onto the hull sides has been neatly applied and has a dark, probably black, centre. This vehicle is also shown on page 20 of the Camouflage & Markings section.



The heavy tank units of the Waffen-SS were originally formed as companies for SS-Panzer-Regimenten 1, 2 and 3 and their complicated evolution is described in some detail in Tiger I: German Army Heavy Tank, Eastem Front Summer 1943, Tiger I & II: German Army and Waffen-SS, Eastern Front 1944, Tiger I & II: German Army ana Waffen-SS, Normandy Campaign 1944 and Tiger I & II: German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West 1945.

Notes

1. Obersturmbannführer Westernhagen was killed later the same day and although the official account stated that he had been caught in an air attack it is almost certain that he took his own life.

2. On 2 May 1945, with the end of the war just days away, a number of men were sent to the Nibelungenwerke at nearby St Valentin to take over six Jagdtigers which were held there. In the event only two could be made ready and these set off for the battalion's positions near Sheibss, 30 kilometres south-west of Sankt Pölten. It seems neither were used in combat although they did reach the front.

3. In a poignant twist of fate Obersturmführer Hans Soretz, the commander of 2.Kompanie who had been with the battalion since its formation, was killed in a car accident as the tanks were preparing to leave. Soretz was the last of the battalion's many

casualties in the West.

4. Hartrampf managed to restore calm but at least four tanks and the battalion's Bergepanther recovery vehicles were damaged by the Soviet bombardment. He apparently chose to ignore the incident and Schienhofen was back with his company in less than a week.

Schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501. Following the Ardennes Offensive the battalion's remaining tanks were transported to Cottbus where they were prepared for a move to Hungary. As part of I.SS-Panzerkorps the battalion took part in the battles to eliminate the Soviet bridgehead on the Gran River during the last two weeks of February 1945 and Operation Frühlingserwachen, or Spring Awakening, in the following month.

When the Red Army's counterattack began on 16 March 1945 the battalion could field just nine Tigers and I.SS-Panzerkorps was ordered to withdraw from the narrow passage between Lake Balaton and Lake Valencese to the area about 10 kilometres west of Stuhlweissenburg. This manoeuvre was attempted on 19 March during the hours of darkness and as any broken-down vehicles could not be recovered, several Tigers had to be destroyed by their own crews.

The remaining tanks spent the following day trying to fight their way into Valpalota without success and the battalion commander, Heinz von Westernhagen, was replaced by Sturmbannführer Heinrich Kling. (1).

Fighting their way towards the West, three Tigers of the battalion's 3.Kompanie reached Deutschkreuz, on the Austrian border, on 31

March 1945 and were soon followed by the remaining tanks and vehicles. In early April the surviving tanks of the battalion were incorporated into SS-Panzer-Regiment 1 as part of II.Abteilung. Records of vehicle strength for this period are almost non-existent and although the tank of Oberscharführer Franz Staudegger, which crashed through a bridge near Rothenau on 18 April 1945, may not have been the battalion's last Tiger, it is the last one mentioned in any reliable account (2).

Schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 502. This battalion fought in the Normandy campaign and the retreat through France and was rebuilt in late 1944. But it was not until 6 March 1945 that the battalion received the last of thirty-one tanks and although this number was fourteen short of the authorised allocation the new battalion commander, Sturmbannführer Kurt Hartrampf, was ordered to be ready to move his tanks to the Eastern Front on the same day (3). Some crews had only received their tanks days before and this lack of training, particularly in coordinated company and battalion exercises, would later have a telling effect. After a lengthy journey by rail the battalion arrived at Dolgelin, about 25 kilometres north of Frankfurt an der Oder, during the evening of 19 March 1945 and prepared to take part in an attack to break through to Küstrin.

On 23 March the Tigers of 2.Kompanie managed to penetrate the first line of Russian defences but were forced to withdraw. The day had not gone well for the battalion with twenty of its tanks left on the battlefield although a number of these were later recovered. Worse, three experienced tank commanders had been killed and that night the officers argued furiously over the battalion's deployment. As the surviving Tigers came under heavy and accurate artillery and rocket fire the discourse became so heated that Obersturmführer Friedrich Schienhofen, the 3.Kompanie commander, drew his pistol and threatened to shot Hartrampf if he did not give the order to pull back. Incredibly, at that very moment, Schienhofen was wounded in the head by a mortar round and carried away (4).

On 27 March 1945 the battalion took part in another attack towards Küstrin but almost immediately ran into a minefield and the Tigers fell back behind Seelow. During the next two weeks the battalion, with twenty-nine operational Tigers, set up defensive positions on the high ground south of Seelow but were ordered to withdraw behind Fürstenwalde, just 25 kilometres from the outer suburbs of Berlin.

By now tanks were being abandoned as they could not be recovered once damaged. On 22 April 1945 the Tigers were involved in heavy fighting east of Müncheberg which lasted well into the night. All the operational tanks were almost out of fuel and several were destroyed by their own crews on the following day. By this time the units of 9.Armee, which included schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 502, were encircled in a large pocket centred on Halbe, south of Berlin and on 27 April 1945 the remaining fourteen tanks of the battalion were concentrated for a breakout attempt the west. In three days of savage fighting the Tigers were able to advance less than 20 kilometres and on 1 May 1945 the battalion's last surviving tank was abandoned near Elsholz, still 60 kilometres from the nearest American units (5).

Schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503. Established as a heavy tank battalion for III.(Germanisches) SS-Panzerkorps in November 1943, the battalion's formation was constantly delayed when men and vehicles were siphoned off to replace losses in other units. On 26 January 1945, with thirty-nine Tiger II tanks, the battalion left for the Eastern Front in two groups and it was planned that the Tigers would take part in an offensive codenamed Sonnenwende which was to launched in mid-February (1).

The Red Army's advance had created a large salient north of the

town of Küstrin and the objective was to launch one assault along the northern edge and another from the west directly towards the town. The northern group was to include twelve tanks with Sturmbannführer Friedrich Herzig, the battalion commander, and was sent to Arnswalde (2) and attached to 11.SS-Panzergrenadier-Division. The remainder were ordered to the area of 9.Armee in front of Küstrin, some 60 kilometres to the southwest. The tanks began arriving at the front on 28 January 1945 but were fed piecemeal into local actions almost immediately (3). A small group made up of a platoon of Tigers from 2. Kompanie, commanded by Untersturmführer Horst Haake, were able to attack towards Küstrin and two of the Tigers managed to fight their way into the town and remained as part of the garrison (4).

Just two days before the main offensive was scheduled to begin, the Tigers were so low on ammunition that Herzig's group was forced to rely on an airdrop of 8.8cm shells which turned out to be anti-aircraft rounds. When the attack finally went ahead the battalion reported that just seventeen Tigers were considered combat ready. By 17 February the tanks at Arnswalde were all withdrawn for repair and in the next few days arrived in Danzig together with the battalion commander and the maintenance platoon. The tanks which were in the forward repair depot at Zachan were towed to Massow, a distance of about 30 kilometres by road, and loaded onto railway cars (5). But due to overloading and excessive speed the train was derailed, irreparably damaging nine tanks and killing over eighty refugees who were fleeing the approaching Russians. The vehicles which could be salvaged were eventually moved to Pasewalk in Germany on 9 March 1945 (6).

While this was happening four tanks of 1.Kompanie were still fighting around Küstrin but were all abandoned due to mechanical failures or lack of fuel by 8 March 1945. Untersturmführer Haake, whose tanks had fought their way into Küstrin, deserted and hid out in northern Germany with his new bride. In late March the Tigers in Danzig took part in the defence of of the city where Untersturmführer Karl Bromann was credited with the destruction

of sixty-six enemy tanks.

During the first weeks of April 1945 the ten Tigers which had made their way to Pasewalk were assembled at Frauenhagen, about 60 kilometres north-east of Berlin, and ordered to make their way to the city. On Monday, 16 April the Russian offensive to capture Berlin began and on the same day, in a rare success, two Soviet tank brigades ran into a trap laid by the Tigers of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503 near Prötzel and over seventy enemy tanks, by the Russians' own admission, were left burning on the battlefield. The fighting went on into the night and the Tiger of Unterscharführer Bootsmann was disabled, just how is unclear, and as it could not be recovered it was abandoned. Sporadic fighting continued throughout the following day and on 21 April 1945 the first of the Tigers withdrew into Hermannstrasse in Neukölln, a southern suburb of Berlin just six kilometres from the city's centre. As this was happening a rifle grenade struck the cupola of one of the Tigers and although the commander, Untersturmführer Gerhard Feige, was killed the tank was able to continue operating. Tiger number 314, commanded by Oberscharführer Georg Diers, was sent to Britz for repair, less than 1 kilometre away.

Notes

1. It should be noted that thirty-five of these vehicles had only arrived over the course of the last month.

2. Modern-day Choszczno in Poland.

3. Six Tigers were lost near Stolzenberg after being surprised by a Russian armoured unit on Monday, 29 January and tanks were still

arriving at Arnswalde on the following Saturday.

4. Haake was born and grew up in Letschin just a few kilometres outside Küstrin. His fiancé was still in the encircled city.

5. Today Suchan and Maszewo in Poland.

6. Here the tanks remained on their flatcars for several days acting as a security detail for the personal train of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler who, at that time, was the commander of Heeresgruppe Weichsel.

Photographed at some time after the battle for Berlin, this Tiger II of 2.Kompanie, schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 503 is one of the vehicles disabled and abandoned during the night of 2 May 1945. The so-called ambush camouflage pattern and large company numbers were a feature of this battalion's tanks and another example is shown on page 26 of the Camouflage & Markings section.

Notes

1. A photograph of this Tiger can be seen on page 2.

2. This tank is depicted on page 26 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

3. It should be remembered that by this time Hitler was dead and had named Goebbels as his successor as Chancellor, a position in which he served for one day before ending his own life. Goebbels' directive to Sturmbannführer Herzig may have been one of his last orders.

4. Several passengers rode on the rear engine decks of some of the tanks and it later transpired that one of these was Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, Hitler's personal secretary and head of the Party Chancellery. None of the passengers survived.

5. As mentioned above the complex history of these units is examined in some detail in the earlier books in this series.

6. Untersturmführer Heidbutzki was an officer of 1.SS-Panzer-Division.

7. The maintenance section, located at Rechberg, had been able to repair a Tiger II, taken over from an army unit, and two of the company's Tiger I tanks and several turretless Soviet M4 tanks which were fitted with 2cm Flakvierling anti-aircraft mounts.

On 22 April six Tigers supported the French volunteers of 33.Waffen Grenadier-Division der SS in the recapture of the Köpenick railway station and on the following day Tiger 314

returned from repairs, now commanded by Untersturmführer Gast from 3.SS-Panzer-Division who the crew had found along the way. The tank of Hauptcharführer Karl Körner was badly damaged on the following day and Körner was ordered to head for the last known location of the maintenance section (l).This left the battalion with nine tanks in total and by this time they were scattered around the city centre with the main command post at the Neukölln courthouse. On 25 April another Tiger was lost in fighting near the command post, leaving the battalion with eight tanks and only one of these could support a counterattack near Hasenheide Park on the northern edge of the Tempelhof airfield. On 30 April 1945 the Tiger commanded by Unterscharführer Karl-Heinz Turk was damaged and although some repairs were affected it was later abandoned on the Potsdamer Platz (2).

On 1 May 1945 the battalion commander was contacted directly by Reichsminister Goebbels and ordered to assemble all his available armoured vehicles at the Friedrichstrasse railway station. The tanks were then to storm the Weidendammer Brücke, fight their way through the northern suburbs of Berlin and break out in the direction of Oranienburg (3).

At around midnight on 2 May 1945, with four Tigers, a single Panther that was now commanded by Hauptscharführer Körner, and a number of other vehicles, the break out began (4). At the first intersection the tanks came under heavy artillery fire and in the confusion that followed the tanks of Obersturmführer Max Lippert and Untersturmführer Oskar Schäfer tried to head west but Schafer's tank was knocked out by a captured 8.8cm gun and Lippert's Tiger broke down and was destroyed by its own crew. Two other Tigers under the command of Oberscharführer Stolze attempted to fight their way to the Spandauer Brücke but both were eventually abandoned.

Later that night Kömer's Panther was set on fire by its crew and the

battalion's last Tiger was bogged down in a meadow north of the city in the early morning. Many of the tank crews, including Sturmbannführer Herzig, were able to reach Ketzin, north-west of Potsdam but were overtaken by the Soviets. The men of the battalion who had remained in Danzig surrendered on 9 May 1945.

SS-Panzer-Regiment 3. In late 1942 heavy tank companies were formed for each of the three Waffen-SS Panzergrenadier divisions that were at that time serving on the Eastern Front (5).

By the summer of 1944 elements of the first two had been expanded to battalion size but the third remained with SS-Panzer-Regiment 3 and was eventually renamed as the regiment's 9.Kompanie. This unit served exclusively in the East and during 1944 took part in the fighting along the Narev River and around Warsaw.

Operation Konrad 1, the attempt to relieve the garrison of Budapest, began on Monday, 1 January 1945 and after something of a false start on the first day the Tigers were able to make contact with the German infantry units that were encircled at Neudorf, now Nyergesujfalu, by Wednesday afternoon and over the next two days pushed as far south as Szomor, just 10 kilometres from the Budapest defensive perimeter. The Tiger company was withdrawn from the front line briefly but returned on 18 January and supported the tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 509. Within less than a week the armoured strength of 3.SS-Panzer-Division had been reduced to a Kampfgruppe made up of two Panther and six Pzkpfw IV tanks and a single serviceable Tiger and by 27 January 1945 all offensive operations had been cancelled and a general withdrawal was ordered.

At the commencement of Operation Frühlingserwachen, or Spring

Awakening, the last major German offensive in the East, the company could muster only six serviceable tanks. When the Soviet counterattack began on 16 March 1945 this number had been reduced to five and in the general confusion of the retreat all the Panzer regiment's supply and transport elements were trapped and destroyed in the town of Mor, north of Stuhlweissenburg. The German withdrawal was covered by a Kampfgruppe under the command of Untersturmführer Willi Heidbutzki with two of the company's Tigers and a number of tanks from Panzer-Regiment 11. On 25 March 1945, fighting desperately in front of the town of Papa, less than 40 kilometres from the Austrian frontier, Heidutzki's group managed to save much of 3.SS-Panzer-Division, particularly the Panzer regiment, from being cut off (6).

By 1 April 1945 what remained of SS-Panzer-Regiment 3 was assembled at Sankt Pölten in southern Austria and the crews without tanks were sent to Vienna to fight as infantry.

The company was now made up of just two Tigers, those of Oberscharführer Alois Tassler and Oberscharführer Ludwig Wimmer, and for much of the time one or both was in repair (7). But the tanks of 9.Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 3 took no further part in the fighting. The Tigers of Tassler and Wimmer were destroyed on 6 May 1945 and the three repaired tanks were blown up by their crews two days later.

Between late 1942, when the first Tiger I tanks were allocated to combat units, and March 1945, when the last Tiger II was completed by Henschel & Sohn, the design of these heavy armoured vehicles was subject to almost constant change and upgrading. The modifications applied to the Tiger I during production have been covered in some detail in the earlier books in this series, Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS Eastern Front 1944, Tiger I: German Army Heavy Tank, Southern Front North Africa, Sicily and Italy 1942-1945and Tiger I: German Army Heavy Tank Eastern Front, Summer 1943. Similarly the earlier modifications to the Tiger II and the creation of the so-called Hybrid Tiger I models were examined in Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS Normandy Campaign 1944 and Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks: German Army and Waffen-SS The Last Battles in the West, 1945. therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary repetition I have concentrated on the later changes to the Tiger II tank here as that is the vehicle which features most heavily in this study.

January 1944. From Fgst Nr.280001, the first production Tiger II, the flat front fenders of the prototype were replaced by a curved version with fixed sideplates. A coat of Zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste, which had been introduced into tank manufacture the previous September, was applied from the start of production.

February 1944. The first pattern upright exhaust pipes were replaced by curved models and the metal shields for the exhausts were dropped from production. An access port with an armoured cover for the blowtorch, used to heat the engine's cooling water in cold weather, was added on the rear plate below the left exhaust.

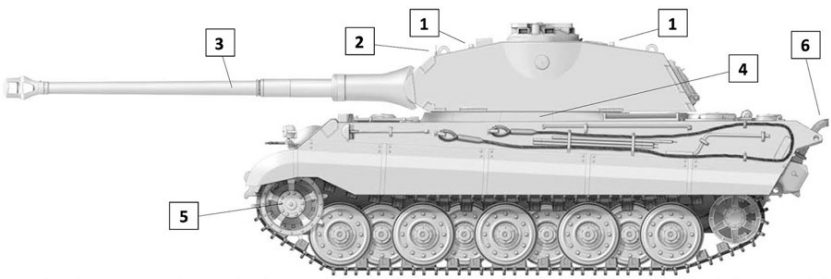
April 1944. A notch was cut from the edge of the glacis in front of the radio operator's periscope to allow a better field of view. The hull front extensions were modified to allow for the carrying of C hooks and the hull extensions at the rear were modified to allow the hooks to pivot upwards. A turret ring guard was added to the hull for tanks with the Porsche turret. The T.Z.F 9b/1 binocular gunsight was replaced by the T.Z.F.9d monocular model. With this change a single aperture for the gunsight was adopted and the redundant apertures were plugged and welded shut. This feature is almost impossible to discern on tanks coated with Zimmerit. A new two-piece gun tube was introduced to replace the original monobloc version of the KwK 43 L/71 gun. A lighter muzzle brake was also introduced.

May 1944. A new double link track, designated Gg 26/800/300, replaced the Gg 24/800/300 design which had been fitted to the first production vehicles. These new tracks were also retrofitted to older tanks. The drive sprocket for the new tracks had nine teeth in place of the previous eighteen. A metal blade sight or the commander was mounted on the turret roof at the left front corner. This was lined up with two wires welded over the foremost periscope of the commander's cupola.

June 1944. The armoured pot-shaped cover for the deep wading equipment was deleted and replaced by a heavy wire mesh screen. This modification had in fact been carried out on most production Tigers but became standard in June. Three sockets or Pilzen were welded to the turret roof to hold the 2-ton jib boom and these were also retrofitted to older models. A new, 40mm thick loader's hatch was introduced. From Fgst Nr.280048 the Serien-Turm or series turret with strengthened, sloping front plate and without the bulge under the cupola was introduced and the turret ring guard, which was no longer

necessary, was dropped from production.

July 1944. Hangers and fasteners were welded to both sides of the turret to hold double lengths of spare track. Small brackets for poison gas identification panels were welded to the top of the gun mantlet and the turret roof at the right rear corner. Units in the field were ordered to replace the 18-tooth drive sprocket ring with the new 9-tooth version. This was sometimes accomplished by cutting out every second tooth.



Panzerkampfwagen Tiger ausf B, completed June 1944. This tank has the sockets (1), or Pilzen, welded to the turret roof, the commander's blade sight in front of the forward lifting eye (2), the two-piece gun tube (3), the turret ring guard (4), the nine-tooth drive sprocket introduced with the Gg 26/800/300 tracks (5) and the curved exhaust pipes (6). The armoured cover for the deep-wading equipment and the metal guards for the engine exhausts have been dropped form production. Not visible in our drawing is the notch in the glacis in front of the driver's periscope, the single aperture for the monocular gun sight and the vent on the rear deck for the fuel system. This tank would also have been coated in Zimmerit.

Notes

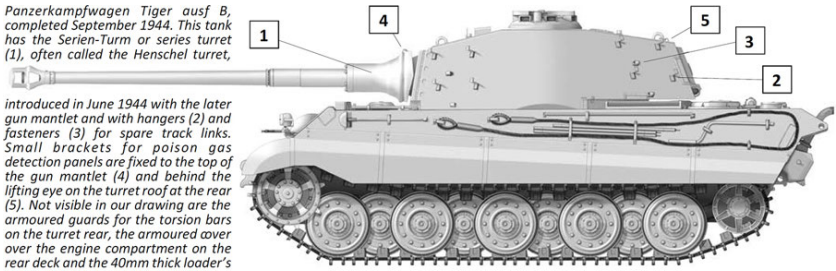
1. Neither the Russians nor the Western Allies employed magnetic mines of their own design during the Second World War which meant that, in the great majority of cases, the application of Zimmerit was totally unnecessary. Indeed, US Army intelligence officers firmly believed, until the end of the war, that Zimmerit was a form of camouflage.

August 1944. Between April and August three additional Krupp-designed turrets were completed and fitted to Henschel

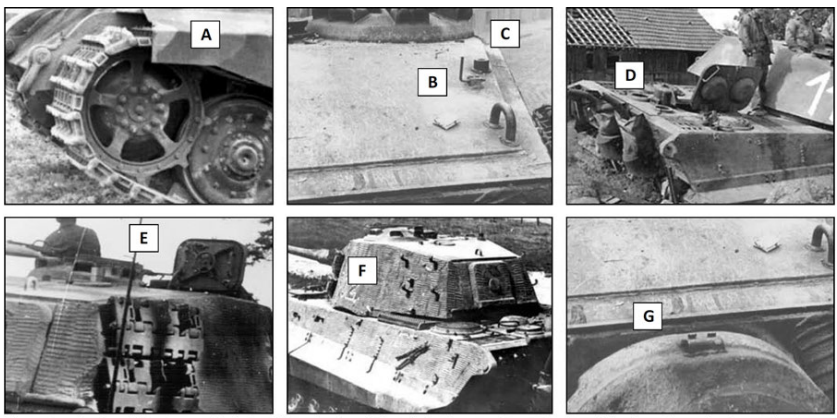
chassis, making a total of fifty. Narrower tracks, Verladekette, were provided for railway transport. To distinguish these tracks from those used for the Tiger I, two or three links out of every ten were supposed to have been painted red. A redesigned commander's cupola was introduced, mounted in a machined recess and secured by seven bolts. On 19 August 1944 an army order was issued directing that tanks were now to be painted in a standardised colour scheme before leaving the assembly plant. From Fgst Nr.280177, the interiors were no longer painted in Elfenbein RAL 1001, a very light, ivory shade, but left in their coat of RAL 8012, a red oxide primer.

September 1944. An order of 9 September directed that the application of Zimmerit was to cease immediately. It was widely believed among tank crews that small arms fire could ignite the antimagnetic mine paste possibly causing a fire. Although the army high command was able to easily disprove this, it was probably seized upon as a convenient excuse to discontinue what had been a costly and largely useless practice (1). The armour manufacturers were ordered to weld an inverted u-shaped guard over the gunsight aperture. As a large numberof turrets had already been delivered to the assembly plants this feature is not commonly seen before January 1945.

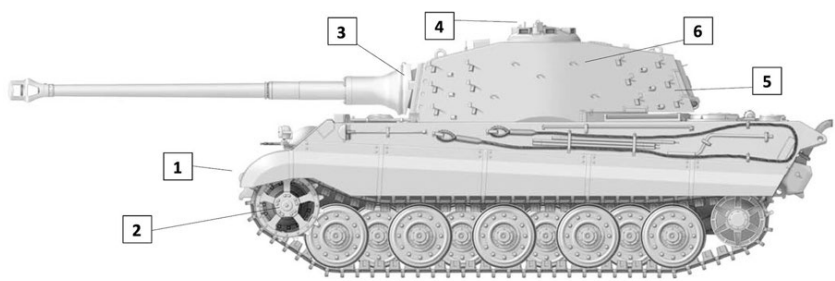
October 1944. From Fgst Nr.280255 a circular plate was bolted over the opening for the deep wading gear on the rear deck. This modification was also to be retrofitted by units in the field. As the jack was no longer issued with the Tiger II the brackets on the rear hull plate were dropped from production. Units in the field were ordered to discontinue the application of Zimmerit. An order of 31 October stipulated that Henschel was to cease the use of Dunkelgelb RAL 7028 as a base colour for armoured vehicles and and introduced a new system which to be based on the red oxide primer using patches of Dunkelgelb and Olivgrun.



Panzerkampfwagen Tiger ausf B, completed September 1944. This tank has the Serien-Turm or series turret (1), often called the Henschel turret, introduced in June 1944 with the later gun mantlet and with hangers (2) and fasteners (3) for spare track links. Small brackets for poison gas detection panels are fixed to the top of the gun mantlet (4) and behind the lifting eye on the turret roof at the rear (5). Not visible in our drawing are the armoured guards for the torsion bars on the turret rear, the armoured cover over the engine compartment on the rear deck and the 40mm thick loader's hatch introduced in June 1944.



Above: Details of modifications made during the production of the Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B, or Tiger II, and the date of introduction. A. The 9-tooth drive sprocket, May 1944. B. The commander's blade sight, May 1944. C. One of three Pilze sockets that supported the 2-ton jib boom crane, June 1944. D. The armoured pot which covered the aperture for the tank's submersible gear, deleted June 1944. Very few tanks were fitted with this. E. The 40mm-thick loader's hatch, June 1944. F. Metal hangers for lengths of spare track, July 1944. These were retrofitted to almost all vehicles. G. The bracket which held a poison gas identification panel, July 1944.



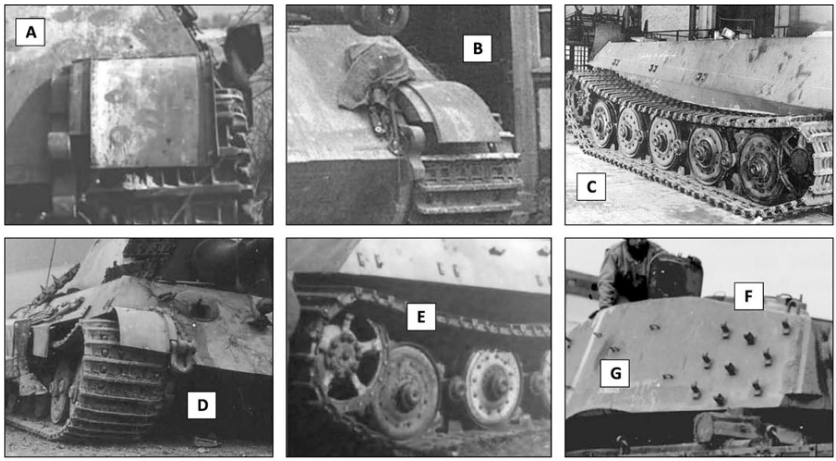
Panzerkampfwagen Tiger ausf B, completed March 1945. This tank has the reinforced front track guards (1), the single link Kgs 73/800/15 tracks and 18-tooth drive sprocket (2). The turret has the metal rain guard over the sight aperture (3) and the post mount (4) for the anti-aircraft machine gun which replaced the ring of the commander's cupola. Also visible are the spare track hangers and fasteners for the single link tracks (5) and five loops (6) to hold foliage camouflage. As no more than thirty completed vehicles were accepted by the Waffenamt during March, very few of the modifications introduced in that month are seen on tanks in the field.

November 1944. Units in the field were ordered to weld track hangers, Erasatzkettenglieder, to the turret sides, a feature which had been incorporated into production in the previous July.

December 1944. An order of 20 December introduced a completely revised camouflage scheme that was to be applied before the tanks left the assembly plant.

January 1945. As an experiment, approval was given to fit armour plates over the air intakes on the rear deck of Tiger II Fgst Nr.280404 as a defence against fire from enemy aircraft. It is unlikely that this innovation was ever introduced into production.

March 1945. New curved track guards reinforced with raised vertical ribs were incorporated into production. Single link Kgs 73/800/152 tracks, sometimes referred to as cross-country tracks, were introduced and three sets of track hangers were to be welded onto the turret sides. The single link tracks also saw the reintroduction of an 18-tooth drive sprocket. The metal ring for the anti-aircraft machine gun welded to the tops of the periscopes of the commander's cupola was dropped from production and replaced by a simple post fixed to the left front periscope. Five semicircular loops were welded to each side of the turret to hold foliage camouflage. The brackets which held the wooden jack block and the fasteners for the track mounting cable were both dropped from production.



Above: Details of modifications made during the production of the Pzkpfw Tiger ausf B, or Tiger II, and the date of introduction. A. and B. The new track guard, March 1945. C. and D. Single link track, March 1945. E. The 18-tooth drive sprocket, March 1945. F. Three sets of track hangers, March 1945. G. Semicircular metal loops to hold foliage camouflage, March 1945.

Dragon Models Ltd

B1-10/F., 603-609 Castle Peak Rd,

Kong Nam Industrial Building,

Tsuen Wan, N. T., Hong Kong

www.dragon-models.com

Dragon USA

1315 John Reed Ct, City of Industry,

CA 91745, USA

www.dragonmodelsusa.com

Tamiya Inc

Shizuoka City, Japan

www.tamiya.com

Trumpeter

NanLong Industrial Park, Sanxiang,

ZhongShan, GuangDong, China

www.trumpeter-china.com

Hobby Boss

NanLong Industrial Park, Sanxiang,

ZhongShan, GuangDong, China

www.hobbyboss.com

Academy Plastic Models

521-1, Yonghyeon-dong, Uijeongbu-si,

Gyeonggi-do, Korea

www.academy.co.kr

Hobby Fan/AFV Club

6F., No.183, Sec. 1, Datong Rd, Xizhi City

Taipei County 221, Taiwan

www.hobbyfan.com

Royal Model

Via E. Montale, 19-95030 Pedara, Italy

www.royalmodel.com

Italeri S.p.A.

via Pradazzo 6/b,

40012 Calderara di Reno.

Bologna, Italy

www.italeri.com

Rye Field Models

www.ryefield-model.com

An almost non-existent website. I would recommend one of the on-line retailers.

Hauler

Jan Sobotka,

Moravská 38,

620 00 Brno,

Czech Republic

Www.hauler.cz

Voyager

Room 501, No.411 4th Village,

SPC Jinshan District,

Shanghai 200540,

P.R.China

www.voyagermodel.com

Griffon Model

Suite 501, Bldg 01, 418 Middle Longpan

Road, Nanjing, China

www.griffonmodel.com

Since writing this book Griffon have added a number of Tiger items to their catalogue

Aber

ul. Jalowcowa 15, 40-750 Katowice, Poland

www.aber.net.pl

E.T. Model

www.etmodeller.com

Friulmodel

H 8142. Urhida, Nefelejcs u. 2., Hungary

www.friulmodel.hu

Modelkasten

Chiyoda-ku Kanda, Nishiki-Cho 1-7, Tokyo, Japan

www.modelkasten.com

Very difficult to navigate but worthwhile.

Eduard Model Accessories

Mirova 170, 435 21 Obrnice,

Czech Republic

www.eduard.com

Master Club

www.masterclub.ru

It appears that this firm is closely associated with Armour 35 a Russsian mail-order company.

Model Artisan Mori

Yasutsugu Mori,

Maison Suiryu 302, Kunoshiro-cho 1-10,

Yokkaichi-City Mie 510-0072, Japan

www.artisanmori.web.fc2.com

RB Model

Powstancow Wlkp.29B,

64-360 Zbaszyn,

Poland

www.rbmodel.com

M Workshop Singapore

91 Bencoolen St, Sunshine Plaza 01-58,

Singapore

www.themworkshop.com

Zvezda (Zvezda-America)

www.zvezda-usa.com

Note that the Russian catalogue is not the same as the US version.

ROCHM Model

www.rochmmodel.com

Rochmmodel@gmail.com

This company has a huge selection of parts and accessories for 1/35 scale Tiger models including sets to build specific vehicles.

Xuân Hà Models,

Chân Dài Hobby

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

www.facebook.com/Chân dài Hobby

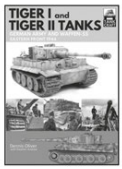
In researching this project I consulted a number of works but no book on the Tiger tanks could be written without reference to the Germany's Tiger Tanks volumes by Hilary L. Doyle and the late

Thomas L. Jentz. I also drew heavily on the works of Oberst Wolfgang Schneider, particularly his histories of the Tiger battalions, and to a lesser extent the books of Waldemar Trojca, Horst Scheibert, Jacek Solarz and Franz Kurowski. An invaluable resource are Thomas Jentz's Panzertruppen books which I would recommend to any reader with an interest in German armour of the Second World War period. I would also recommend Tiger by Egon Kleine and Volkmar Kühn although it is difficult to obtain and has only been published in German.I should also acknowledge Hartmut von Holdt of Tiger im Focus for his many insightful observations, and the contributors to the Axis History and the Feldgrau forums, especially Martin Block and the late Ron Klages whose research on unit histories and vehicle allocations would fill many volumes. I would like to thank Lester Plaskitt, Steve Shrimpton and Sheng Hui who very generously allowed me to publish the images of their work. As always, I am indebted to Karl Berne, Valeri Polokov and J.Howard Parker for their invaluable assistance with the photographs and period insignia.

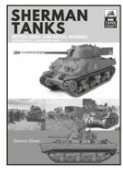
Untersturmführer Karl Brommann, with bandaged head, and members of 2.Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 photographed during the fighting for Danzig in early 1945. Note the kill rings on the barrel of the 8.8cm gun. On 2 March Brommann was burnt on the head and hands and this photograph was taken some time after that but before 25 March 1945 when he was wounded seriously enough to be hospitalised.

The aim of these innovative series is to provide modelmakers and enthusiasts with a new standard of primarily visual reference to both the full-size vehicles and their models, using detailed line drawings, plans and photographs, many in full colour. Each book is devoted to a famous military vehicle – chosen for its popularity as a modelling subject – but will range from main battle tanks to 4x4s.

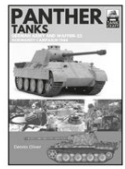
TANK CRAFT



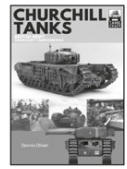
Tiger I and Tiger II: Tanks of the German Army and Waffen-SS
Eastern Front 1944



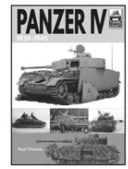
Sherman Tanks of the British Army and Royal Marines
Normandy Campaign 1944



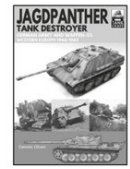
Panther Tanks
Germany Army and Waffen-SS, Normandy Campaign 1944



Churchill Tanks
British Army, North-west Europe 1944–1945



Panzer IV
1939–1945



Jagdpanther Tank Destroyer
German Army and Waffen-SS, Western Europe 1944–1945

Panzer I & II
Blueprint for Blitzkrieg 1933–1941

T-34
Russia's Armoured Spearhead

Tiger I
German Army Heavy Tank, Southern Front, North Africa, Sicily and Italy, 1942–1945

Cromwell and Centaur Tanks
British Army and Royal Marines, North-west Europe 1944–1945

Centurion
Armoured Hero of Post-war Tank Battles

Sherman Tanks, US Army, North-western Europe, 1944–1945

Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks, German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West, 1945

T-54/55
Soviet Cold War Main Battle Tank

Tank Destroyer
Achilles and M10, British Army Anti-Tank Units, Western Europe, 1944–1945

FORTHCOMING

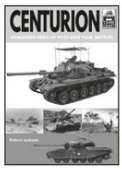
Panther: Germany Army and Waffen-SS
Defence of the West

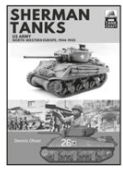
Chieftain
British Cold War Main Battle Tank

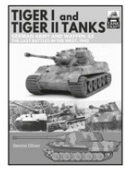
Challenger 1
British Main Battle Tank of the Gulf War

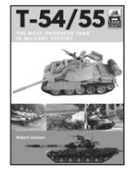
M1 Abrams
The US's Main Battle Tank in American and Foreign Service, 1981-2018

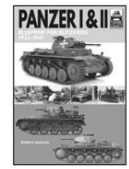
Tiger I: German Army Heavy Tank
Eastern Front, Summer 1943



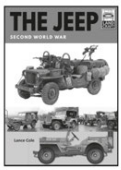






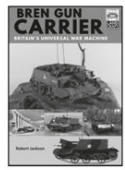


LAND CRAFT



The Jeep
Second World War

M2/M3
American Half-tracks of the Second World War



Bren Gun Carrier
Britain's Universal War Machine

A wide range of kits and accessories attests to the long-standing popularity of these military vehicles as modelling subjects, while significant differences between variants offers opportunities to 'individualize' models, as is so well illustrated in these books by many archive and modern photographs.